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POLL RESULTS

With the recent tragedy in Connecticut, should the U.S. implement stricter gun control laws?

Yes	107
No	40
No opinion	7

Sunday, Dec. 30, 2012

INSIDE

BUSINESS



The United States, China and Japan struggled in 2012.

► PAGE 13

NATION



Retired Gen. Schwarzkopf didn't care much for his nickname.

► PAGE 14

LIFE & STYLE



Ryan Seacrest has a New Year's resolution for 2013.

► PAGE 21

PERSONS OF THE YEAR

ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

You could almost say that change in the CNMI has become inevitable.

» The rise of advocacy in the CNMI

The year 2012 witnessed thousands from all walks of life coming out to strongly advocate for their collective and individual sociopolitical causes through peaceful roadside waving and rallies, village campaigns, letters to the editor, social media, informal gatherings, halls of government offices and, in some cases, by literally running after bad people. And many others who kept quiet while debates raged on made their voices heard loud and clear through the election ballot.

These advocates for change are altering the course of CNMI history for the better, making them the *Saipan Tribune's* 2012 Persons of the Year.

What started out as a one-woman rally with a recycled cardboard sign, "Impeach, Honk," on a roadside leading to Capital Hill on Aug. 18 became a major political rally within days, amid talks that some House minority bloc members were preparing a resolution to impeach the governor.

See ADVOCATES on Page 4



The winds of change blew with supertyphoon strength through the Commonwealth in 2012, with many individuals realizing their untapped capacity to become agents for change, relying less on the government and more on their own capacity to make a difference in the community. Here, a group supporting clean government takes part in a roadside waving along Beach Road in the latter part of 2012.

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Himawari

By CLARISSA V. DAVID
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REPORTER



The Himawari Deli & Bakery Store, Hotel & Restaurant in Garapan has managed to survive the continued weakness of the local economy and even expanded in 2012.

The need to acquaint the local community with authentic Japanese cuisine, gave rise to Himawari Deli & Bakery Store, Hotel & Restaurant in June 2006.

From its humble beginnings as a

small deli and hotel handled by a nine-member crew, Himawari has expanded its operations to make Japanese dining all the rage on Saipan. Tucked away in

See HIMAWARI on Page 4

Regents: No-confidence vote against Hart invalid

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

After a daylong discussion and deliberation both in the open and in executive sessions, the Board of Regents ruled that the no-confidence vote issued by faculty members against Sharon Y. Hart, Ph.D., was invalid because the faculty assembly had no quorum when it held the vote.



BOR chair Juan T. Lizama made this announcement after the board's three-hour executive session Friday noon, saying the decision was based on the total number of faculty employees at the college, which is 61.

See REGENTS on Page 4

A roundup of the top stories of 2012. PAGE 2
AP critics pick the year's best movies. PAGE 19

Local

A ROUNDUP OF THE TOP STORIES OF 2012

Impeachment bid makes history

A historic attempt to impeach two-term Gov. Benigno R. Fitial over 16 allegations of corruption, neglect of duty, and felony made 2012 a year full of sociopolitical awakening, surprises, and unprecedented reality drama on Capitol Hill.



But with a new Legislature taking office in January 2013, the governor may not escape an impeachment bid the second time around.

The governor-aligned House

majority defeated the impeachment resolution in October by a vote of 10-9. At least 14 "yes" votes in the 20-member House were needed to impeach the governor and at least six "yes" votes to convict him in the nine-member Senate.

The defeat of the minority bloc's impeachment resolution was just a warm-up to what's to come in January 2013 when they become the supermajority.

"We will finish what we started. The public mandate is clear, to remove the governor," said

incoming House Speaker Joe Deleon Guerrero (IR-Saipan), main author of the impeachment resolution.

The impeachment process—the first of its kind in CNMI history—consumed much of the population in 2012 even as villages had to endure a spate of burglaries, at least two high-profile yet unsolved murders, public agencies still under a state of emergency, and a plane crash that claimed the life of a tourist. *(Haidee V. Eugenio)*

GOP suffers great loss in election

A silent majority and those advocating for change delivered a stinging rebuke to Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and his Republican Party during the Nov. 6 mid-term elections when they removed most of the governor's candidates and those aligned with him. This ensured that a second impeachment try will no longer be blocked by lawmakers aligned with the governor.

Victorious were those that supported impeaching the governor. They included so-called Independent Republicans and members of the Covenant Party.

A day after the election, pro-

impeachment lawmakers and supporters called on the governor to step down or be impeached by a new House majority in January 2013.

Fitial is staying put, and asked that elected officials "put politics aside and put the CNMI first."

"To save everyone the time, effort and other resources, he should just step down," said Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), who won a landslide victory over the governor's delegate candidate. *(Haidee V. Eugenio)*

Yang when a family friend offered his assistance to help identify the victim.

With the Department of Public Safety facing a blank wall in the investigation, it recently released the photographs of the victims, hoping that anyone with information about the case can contact police. The case remains unsolved. *(Ferdie de la Torre)*

Romero murder rattles CNMI

Emerita Relata Romero, a 37-year-old bartender at Godfather's Bar, disappeared in the early morning of Feb. 5. Police reportedly received a 911 call from Romero's cell phone at 3:02am, saying "Marianas Resort" then the line was cut off.

Romero was reported last seen alive at approximately 3am boarding a tinted car in the parking area of Call-A-Ride Saipan in Garapan. Two days later, the island was stunned when Federal Bureau of Investigation agents found Romero's body at the northernmost building of the former La Fiesta Mall in San Roque. Eduardo Relata identified the body of his sister, Romero, through her silver anklet on the right ankle, and also her nails and teeth.

Police classified the case as a homicide, but refused to disclose the cause of death as well as her injuries.

Romero's co-workers and friends conducted fundraisers, including a vigil, to help gather money for Romero's two children—then 18 and 8 years old—who are with their father

Continued on Next Page

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From Page 2

in Bulacan, Philippines.

At a Mass and public viewing at Kristo Rai Church on Feb. 17, Lt. Gov. Eloy S. Inos vowed that the administration will do its best to bring the suspect to justice. Romero's body arrived in Manila the following day.

It will be one year since Romero's murder in February 2013. Although it was reported that police have already identified the suspect, no charges have been filed. (*Ferdie de la Torre*)

Ed Buckingham: From attorney general to fugitive from justice

Edward T. Buckingham went from being the CNMI's attorney general to a fugitive from justice when he failed to show up in court despite being served a penal summons in early August.

Buckingham left the CNMI in an eventful morning of Aug. 4, after an unsuccessful attempt to shield himself from being served a penal summons related to criminal complaints, including his alleged hosting of a delegate candidate campaign in 2010 and approval of a sole-source ARRA management contract.

Armed police and ports police officers helped him evade the service of the penal summons by the Office of the Public Auditor, until an FBI agent showed up and served him moments before his flight took off. OPA amended the criminal complaint against him to include obstruction of justice. He hasn't since stepped foot on the

CNMI again.

The former AG also left the CNMI a day after he and the governor signed a no-bid, \$190.8-million power purchase agreement with Saipan Development LLC for a 25-year period.

In the past few weeks, lawmakers and other private citizens have been urging Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and new Attorney General Joey Patrick San Nicolas to have Buckingham extradited to the CNM to face the criminal charges filed by against him. (*Haidee V. Eugenio*)

Plane crash kills one

A Piper Cherokee aircraft bound for Tinian crashed on the runway at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport on Nov. 19, killing one passenger and injuring six others, including the pilot.

Lu Wei Lian, a 37-year-old female tourist from Shanghai, China, was pronounced dead on arrival due to burns and multiple body fractures.

The plane, operated by Star Marianas Air, crashed at the airport soon after takeoff.

The National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration conducted a federal investigation.

It was the first time in many years that a fatal plane crash occurred in the CNMI. In 2006, a similar Piper Cherokee aircraft bound for Tinian crashed in Upper Dandan, injuring the pilot and six passengers. (*Ferdie de la Torre*)

'Annus horribilis' at CHC

The year 2012 challenged

the very existence of the only public hospital in the Commonwealth. The newly created autonomous Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. initiated an emergency headcount reduction that brought down its workforce from 600 to 450. The exodus of 38 nurses and some doctors, lack of necessary supplies, dilapidated medical equipment,

and a federal investigation on unpaid wages and overtime of hospital personnel further heightened the difficulty in maintaining CHC's operation.

Due to lack of funds for its operation, the corporation threatened to shutdown non-essential units, resulting in the immediate issuance of \$3 million line of credit by the Marianas

Public Land Trust.

In September, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid slapped the hospital with three immediate jeopardy statuses due to serious deficiencies uncovered during a survey visit. Thirteen more citations were issued and the corporation was given only until February 2013 to address these or its certifica-

tion will be revoked. At stake is \$22 million in federal monies for Medicaid and Medicare that will be lost. (*Moneth G. Deposa*)

Fund's surprise bankruptcy filing

The bankruptcy case filed by the NMI Retirement Fund in April

Continued on Page 5



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REGENTS

From Page 1

The no-confidence vote against Hart was issued on Dec. 14 during a faculty assembly, which reportedly had 27 individuals in attendance. Of that number, 23 cast their votes: 19 voted yes; two voted no; two abstained; and five did not participate in the voting exercise.

Lizama ruled that pursuant to the bylaws of the faculty assembly, it has to have a quorum when taking such an action. He said the assembly failed to meet the quorum of 29.

According to Faculty Senate president Amanda Angel-Diaz and faculty

members Cyndi Guerrero and Kyle Podziewski, the board used an "uncertain or incorrect" number as the basis for its decision. They told *Saipan Tribune* that they found a discrepancy in the number of faculty members provided by the HR department after they found double entries and names of employees who have long been out of the college.

Based on their numbers, NMC has a total of 55 faculty employees: 31 instructional faculty and 24 non-instructional faculty. The 27 that attended the Dec. 14 assembly, they believe, is more than the required quorum.

After a lengthy discussion on the "real number," the board allowed Angel-Diaz to "reconfirm" the meeting

attendance and go back to the board in 10 days. If no changes are reported, Angel-Diaz said the board's determination that the no-confidence vote is invalid will stand.

"It's not a dead issue because they want us to verify our numbers. We were given 10 days to bring forth any change, if there's a change," she told *Saipan Tribune*.

Faculty concerns

If there's one thing the faculty members appreciated in the board's actions last Friday, it was the decision of the regents to accept the report of the Faculty Senate president that cited all the reasons why the no-confidence vote was

taken against the president.

Lizama kept all reports—both the evidence report from Angel-Diaz and response from Hart—sealed last Friday, pending a "review and investigation" to be conducted by the board on Jan. 3 and 4.

"And we are appreciative because that's what really led to the no-confidence vote. The premise of our vote are all those concerns [in the report] and we're happy that they accepted [the documents]," said faculty member Cyndi Guerrero.

For Angel-Diaz, Guerrero, and Podziewski, the no-confidence vote is the sentiment of the majority of faculty and was done legitimately. The three

hope that each regent will do their "sworn duty" to protect the college's interest in conducting a thorough investigation of all concerns raised by employees.

Hart asked the board for an expedited review of all the documents submitted, as she and Lizama need to travel to San Francisco this month to attend the accreditation assembly. NMC's continued probation status will be decided at this assembly and will be announced in February.

Hart also revealed plans to address the faculty assembly and the college community regarding the no-confidence vote before she reports to the Accrediting Commission of Colleges and Junior Colleges assembly.

HIMAWARI

From Page 1

a quiet residential neighborhood in Garapan, Himawari now features a bigger bakery that produces one of the most in-demand pastries in the neighborhood, a deli that takes both oriental international delights to a new level, and a 120-seater restaurant that's almost always bustling with activity.

The primary goal of Himawari was to introduce to the local population tasteful interpretations of healthy and quality Japanese food, says Tatsuhito Suzuki. He and Itsuro Hosoda serve as vice president and president, respectively, of Himawari Saipan, Inc., which owns the business with the similar name.

While other investors would have thought twice of creating a new busi-

ness two months after the JAL pullout, the two decided to open what is now considered one of the more popular and preferred Japanese eateries on island.

"At that time, economy was already slow, everybody was pessimistic because we didn't have as many tourists," recounts Suzuki. "But we believe on Saipan and what it has to offer such as nice weather all year round and great people. Overall, it's a beautiful island."

More than six years later and Himawari is among the few businesses that remain standing and continue to weather the island economy's instability.

"We're surviving with low profit. We're lucky," said Suzuki.

He noted how Japanese food is perceived as expensive by many people. That's where Himawari comes in, allowing customers to enjoy delectable dishes that are easy on the wallet.

All the food served at Himawari are carefully prepared daily, using only the freshest and most authentic Japanese ingredients, according to Suzuki.

Himawari's wide selection includes not only Japanese victuals like sushi rolls, tempura, yakisoba, sashimi, and varied bento servings, but also international dishes like different types of pasta and Chinese food—perfect for customers on the go. Its bakery, meanwhile, offers flavored rolls and loaves, donuts, pizza, croissants, and whole wheat variants, and accepts special orders of cakes for special occasions.

If you're looking to relish and appreciate every mouthful, then the restaurant is just right for you. Dine in with their Sushi Deluxe, Sakura Nigiri Set (with shrimp, salmon, and yellow fin), and the Octopus Garlic, paired with your favorite cocktails and other beverages. These and other restaurant

specials are prepared by a team headed by Lito Petonio, whose culinary skills have been honed by years of experience at premier hotels on island.

This 2012, Himawari completed several of its expansion plans, including the restaurant that got bigger from its initial 35 seats to 120, including a Japanese-style private room that's good for meetings as it holds up to eight persons; the warehouse on the side of its building to accommodate the additional demand, given that the store is a direct importer of Japanese goods; and the hotel, which is currently being expanded to feature 37 rooms by January.

Asked about their trade secret on how Himawari has survived and thrived after several years, Suzuki said the company was fortunate enough to find a good location in an equally good neighborhood, valuable employ-

ees, and supportive government agencies that issue permits and licenses for them—all of which are instrumental in providing quality food and friendly customer service to make patrons keep coming back to the establishment.

With the New Year fast approaching, Suzuki said they have great things that their clientele can look forward to like an improved menu for better and more food choices. Himawari is also set to become a Certified Angus Beef retailer by early 2013, thanks to the company's new partnership with Triple J.

If possible, Suzuki said they also want to open a Himawari store in Guam since their company has already received a lot of offers from customers based on the neighboring island.

"We appreciate all customers who have patronized us so we can continue doing business on Saipan, an island that we love," added Suzuki.

ADVOCATES

From Page 1

That woman said she represents the "silent majority" already fed up with corruption and other bad things in government.

"A lot of people are afraid to talk because they might lose their government job. But this needs to be done. People must stand up for people," she said.

Nine days later and for the first time in CNMI history, a resolution impeaching a sitting governor was introduced by House minority bloc leader Joe Deleon Guerrero (IR-Saipan) and six others, listing 16 articles or allegations of corruption, neglect of duty, and felony.

Losing faith

Impeachment became one of the most divisive political issues in this U.S. territory of almost 54,000 people.

"Our people have lost faith and confidence in the ability and leadership of Governor Benigno R. Fitial to govern the Commonwealth as its highest elected official. It is no longer a question of should we impeach but how soon," Deleon Guerrero said when he pre-filed the milestone impeachment resolution on Aug. 27.

Lawmakers' efforts were complemented by private citizens' actions. Individual agents of change, including Glen Hunter, Ed Propst, Brian Kendall, and many others strongly advocated a transparent and corruption-free government, which jived with the reasons for filing an impeachment resolution.

These agents of change enabled people to do more and find a better perspective on life. They organized and led peaceful roadside rallies, launched online petition urging lawmakers

to impeach the governor, promoted their causes in letters to the editor and through social media. They were harassed by those opposed to their ideas and actions for change but they were undeterred.

Hunter and others also founded Rising Tide, a civic action group strongly advocating government accountability and transparency, end public corruption, and restore people's trust in government by improving the credibility and integrity of future elections in the CNMI. Rising Tide volunteers also took part in the first ever nonpartisan Election Observation project during the Nov. 6 mid-term elections.

Critical vote

On Oct. 17, during a lengthy and tension-filled session on Capital Hill, the House leadership aligned with the governor refused to allow a Special Committee on Impeachment to complete its report which the minority bloc said would show that the allegations of corruption, neglect of duty, and felony are well supported.

The governor-aligned leadership moved to vote on the impeachment resolution, which ended up having 10 "no" votes and nine "yes" votes. At least 14 "yes" votes in the 20-member House were needed to impeach the governor.

After the vote, private citizens, as well as pro-impeachment lawmakers, ramped up their campaigns for a clean and accountable government.

While these were happening, the governor's Republican Party was also ramping up its own message of change. At least for the governor, that particular change is ensuring that the House and Senate work with the administration and not against it to "move the Commonwealth forward."



A supporter of the bid to impeach Gov. Benigno R. Fitial waves to motorists during a rally on Beach Road in the latter part of this year.

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

People 'voted' for change

By that time, it became more apparent that what was to happen to the movement advocating a clean and honest government would be entirely up to individual voters.

And in a stinging rebuke to the governor and his Republican Party, the silent majority of voters rejected most of the governor's candidates that might shield him, again, from being impeached and from having a change in government.

"The people have spoken. They gave us the mandate to finish what we started, to impeach the governor and fight corruption. We have the votes to impeach him," the main author of the impeachment resolution said. Deleon Guerrero will also be the incoming speaker in the 18th House of Representatives wherein 16 of 20 members are expected to vote "yes" to another impeachment resolution.

For some, people have not spoken

but "shouted" for change in government leadership.

The movement to change how voters elect their leaders was also such a force that many people made it known that they voted for candidates that they thought would help the CNMI move forward and not because they are relatives.

"It's the difference between staying the same and change," one of the voters said.

Good Samaritans

Advocating change in 2012 was not restricted to politics. Change is also starting to mean relying less on government and more on our individual capacity to make a difference and solve our own problems.

When an 8-year-old patient named Dora Grace Ada Camacho needed help, individuals rushed to help with their in-kind and cash donations. For months, she was in hospital bed paralyzed from the neck down but her story of courage

in the face of a serious medical condition inspired people in the CNMI and other parts of the world to help her get treatment in California.

When Kanis Sinounou took on a robber who was assaulting two female Russian tourists on Aug. 10, he didn't realize that it would have an impact on how people view their community's peace and safety. He held down the robber until the police came.

"I couldn't just walk away from it. I felt like I had to do something," Sinounou later said during a ceremony honoring his heroism.

There were many others like Sinounou who became agents of change in their own ways. Although answering to separate calls, they were one in saying, "enough is enough" and did something to stop a bad situation, or allow something to happen for the better.

Thyse Tutiy, an 18-year-old senior at Marianas High School, chased after a purse snatcher who victimized two tourists in Garapan in October. He helped police officers catch the culprit.

"The more good people we have around, the less problems we have," he said later when he was awarded the Ruth Tighe Good Citizen Award by civic action group Rising Tide.

Fellow Ruth Tighe Good Citizen Award Jayson Garcia Abigania, 32, witnessed a hit-and-run incident in Kannat Tabla on Oct. 27. After calling 911, he immediately went on a high-speed chase to pursue the vehicle of the suspect, who was later found to be an intoxicated police officer.

"Every little thing counts, whether volunteering or helping out in beach cleanups," he said. "It doesn't have to be something big. We could all take small steps to have a better community."

From Page 3

this year caught many members flat-footed, causing many retirees to panic over the fate of their contributions. The issue was further heightened when Gov. Benigno R. Fitial issued an executive order declaring the Fund under a state of emergency and transferred its operation under the Executive Branch's Finance Department.

Also notable this year was the non-renewal of the Fund's administrator Richard Villagomez in August and the loss of board quorum that resulted in the appointment of Joseph Razzano as the trustee *ad litem*. The passage of Public Law 17-82 that authorizes members to refund contributions also shook the organization after over 1,700 applied for refunds since August. The *ad litem*'s decision to suspend the disbursement of these refunds heightened the controversy, with the decision being blasted many members and the government itself. On the court's table now is the potential appointment of a receiver for the pension agency. (Moneth G. Deposa)

Uptick in burglaries, robberies

Burglars and robbers literally operated all year-round in 2012. In fact, acting Department of Public Safety commissioner Ambrosio Ogunmoro said last week that burglaries, robberies, thefts, and arson cases on the island have reached epidemic proportions.

From Jan. 1, 2012, to Sept. 30, 2012, a total of 1,108 incidents of burglary, robbery, and theft, plus 12 arson cases have been reported to the police, according to DPS.

These criminals struck even in daylight, beating up female tourists and shoppers, and despite knowing the presence of surveillance cameras. Snatchers were also active in Kannat Tabla and Garapan, victimizing women walking on roads.

Because of the significant rise of burglary, robbery, and other crimes, Ogunmoro reactivated the Thief Apprehension Select Coalition to go after these criminals. TASC was created in 2002 as a special group that focused on solving burglary, theft, and robbery cases. It was credited for 107 arrests between July 28 and Dec. 31, 2002. Of those arrests, 104 resulted in convictions. (Ferdie de la Torre)

Philippine Consulate closes

After more than 23 years of serving the Filipino community in the Northern Marianas, the Philippine Consulate General on Saipan shut down its doors after Oct. 31, its last day of operations. Scores of Filipino workers lined up at the Consulate office in Susupe in the days leading to its closure, availing of consular services like passport renewal. With the consulate shutdown, the Guam Consulate has been tasked to take over the consular responsibilities on

Community rallies behind Dora

When news broke regarding Dora Grace Ada Camacho's situation, individuals and organizations in the community came together to do what they can for the paralyzed 8-year-old patient at the Commonwealth Health Center. Dora's circumstance has appealed to different celebrities and public figures, from Nickelodeon characters and church members to Zumba enthusiasts and President Barack Obama and his family. Donations

poured in, fundraisers were organized, and prayers were offered to have the young patient flown to the mainland where she could receive treatment that would allow her to move once again. (Clarissa V. David)

Transition to federal immigration: 3 years later

Three years since the federal government took control of CNMI immigration on Nov. 28, 2009, and barely two years before the end of the transition period on Dec. 31, 2014, a little

over 3,190 foreign workers of over 12,000 petitioned for a Commonwealth-only worker status have yet to get their CW-1 permits. The rest are either now renewing their permits or had already been denied.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services expects to complete the processing of the initial CW permits by end-January 2013.

Securing CW visas in the foreign workers' country of origin when they temporarily exit the CNMI could take five days to

almost two months from the date of the interview at a U.S. Embassy, and this has been a source of frustration.

CW-1 workers from the Philippines recently got an exemption once again from paying federal taxes that include Social Security and Medicare, but the exemption will only be until Dec. 31, 2014.

After the transition period ends on Dec. 31, 2014, the number of CW-1 workers should be down from the current cap of

Continued on Next Page

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BEEN EXTENDED**



Sobriety checkpoints' schedule

As part of 2012 National Campaign for Drunk and Drugged Driving prevention month, the Department of Public Safety will be conducting DUI/sobriety checkpoints on the dates and times listed below:

MONDAY, DEC. 31, 2012:

- From 5:30pm to 6:45pm, Chalan Pale' Arnold Gualo Rai by Safety First.
- From 7:30pm to 8:45pm, Beach Road San Jose by Modern Stationary.
- THURSDAY, JANUARY 03, 2013**
- From 6pm to 7:15pm, Isa Drive Dandan by Jo-

From Page 5

15,000 to "zero" unless the U.S. Secretary of Labor extends the transition period. The private sector and the government are one in saying, "Extend the transition period." (Haidee V. Eugenio)

Continued probation, no-confidence vote at NMC

The Northern Marianas College remained in the limelight in 2012 after it failed to rectify three of the 11 original concerns raised by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Ju-

nior Colleges. The commission placed the college on "continued probation" status in February. The ACCJC also cited two additional concerns that must be fully addressed by October or the college's accreditation will be terminated.

The college, that same year, noted a spike in its enrollment and announced internal austerity measures to cope with budgetary constraints, including the increase in class ratio, the freeze hiring of non-essential posts, allowing college staff to teach programs, and announced vacancies internally to save on

costs, among others.

Later in the year, the faculty assembly issued a no-confidence vote against NMC president Sharon Y. Hart whom they accused of fiscal mismanagement, abuse of power, favoritism, and retaliation, among other allegations. (Moneth G. Deposa)

Challenges hound public schools

The Public School System was at the front line of 2012 after the agency suffered multiple challenges in its operation as a result of limited funding from the lo-

cal government. As early as February, Education Commissioner Rita A. Sablan enforced an across-the-board four-hour aircon use in all its schools and offices in addition to the implementation of early dismissal of classes—all to save on utility costs.

In March this year, power and water supply in at least eight schools were disconnected as a result of its growing debt with the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.

PSS was also challenged by numerous burglaries in many of its schools, losing valuable student materials and tools. (Moneth G. Deposa)

Aging Office controversies

The island's elderly and the Aging Office took a heavy beating

toward the latter part of the year amid the controversy surrounding the non-renewal of program coordinator Walter Manglona's contract. The information, which initially surfaced in October and caused an uproar among the *man'amko*, was allegedly due to Manglona's endorsement of Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan's candidacy as CNMI delegate, as well as Gov. Benigno Fitial's impeachment. Despite threats of a walkout and strings of lawsuits, Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Secretary Melvin Faisao signed a letter given to Manglona on Nov. 13, notifying the latter that his last day at work was on Nov. 30. The day had come and gone, and Manglona was retained to carry on his duties and responsibilities, creating programs and activities that entertain the senior citizens at the Aging Center, showcase their talents, and prove their important role in the community. (Clarissa V. David)

Tan Holdings celebrates 40th years by giving back

Tan Holdings marked another milestone in its history. As the largest private employer in the CNMI, it commemorated four decades of doing business in Micronesia this year by taking part in various community service initiatives throughout 2012. Dr. Tan Siu Lin, the patriarch who established the family-owned business, in April led the presentation of close to \$300,000 worth of scholarships and other donations to education officials and school administrators.

In October, the company launched its "Basket of Hope" initiative, wherein 400 gift baskets containing assorted goods were distributed to families of public school students on Saipan, while their counterparts on Tinian and Rota received theirs this month.

Meanwhile, Tan Holdings president Jerry Tan, along with executive vice president George Chiu, also presented a \$1-million check to officials of the University of Guam and the UOG Endowment Foundation. The donation will help UOG, alma mater of the Tan siblings, expand its campus to accommodate new buildings and offer more programs.

Executives of Tan Holdings also joined in the anniversary celebration by planting a total of 400 flame trees, CNMI's state tree, in different sites on Saipan.

To further thank the island residents for their support, Tan Holdings sponsored a free concert featuring Philippine Concert King Martin Nievera at the Hopwood Jr. High School field on Nov. 30. (Clarissa V. David)

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 2007 Honda Accord LX STOCK # 4A068311 \$12,995.00*	 2010 Honda Civic LX STOCK # AE035279 \$16,995.00*	 2010 Nissan Frontier SV STOCK # AC416943 \$24,995.00*
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High Court affirms decision in award of attorney fees

FHB names winner of 15th Anniversary Sweepstakes



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
From left, Laura-Lynn Dacanay, First Hawaiian Bank senior vice president, Guam and CNMI region manager; Israel Mendiola De Leon, winner; and Juan Lizama, First Hawaiian Bank vice president and area manager.

CNMI resident Israel Mendiola De Leon was selected as the winner of the First Hawaiian Bank 15th Anniversary Celebration

Sweepstakes, according to an announcement Friday by Juan Lizama, First Hawaiian Bank vice president/area manager, Gualo Rai Branch.

To commemorate its 15 years of service and commitment to the CNMI, First Hawaiian Bank offered residents the opportunity to win a trip for two from Saipan to any one of United Airlines' destinations within Asia, Micronesia, or Cairns, Australia.

First Hawaiian Bank (fhb.com) with some \$16.1 billion in assets was founded in 1858 and is the largest and oldest bank in Hawaii. As a financial industry leader, First Hawaiian Bank has been helping individuals, families and businesses achieve their financial goals for over 154 years. (PR)

Supreme Court issues opinion in Matsunaga v. Cushnie case

On Friday, Dec. 28, 2012, the Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Matsunaga v. Cushnie*, which asked whether Douglas Cushnie owed prejudgment interest on \$50,000 he forfeited while representing Elizabeth Matsunaga in a real estate transaction. The High Court affirmed the trial court's finding that Cushnie did not owe prejudgment interest.

The trial court found Cushnie had breached his fiduciary duty knowingly in violation of his ethical duties, and ordered him, among other things, to forfeit \$50,000. On appeal, Matsunaga claimed that the trial court order required Cushnie to pay prejudgment interest on the \$50,000.

While the trial court order

explained why prejudgment interest attached to certain amounts, then ordered Cushnie to pay prejudgment interest on those amounts, the order did not mention prejudgment interest on the disputed forfeiture of \$50,000. Because the order explicitly discussed and awarded prejudgment interest on certain amounts but not the disputed one, the High Court held that the order's plain meaning precluded awarding prejudgment interest on the disputed amount.

The Supreme Court's full opinion is *Matsunaga v. Cushnie*, 2012 MP 18, and can be found at http://www.cnmilaw.org/supreme_12.htm. (NMI Judiciary)

nardo A. Hiponia and Serafin Esperencilla (who both held insurance from Royal Crown). The plaintiffs prevailed in the trial court on claims brought under the Commonwealth Consumer Protection Act and sought attorney fees for their work at trial.

The plaintiffs also brought various post-trial motions to protect their award pending appeal but did not bring a supplemental motion for attorney fees related to this post-trial phase. In 2010, the Supreme Court affirmed the merits of the plaintiffs' claim as well as the trial court's award of attorney fees for trial work. On remand from the 2010 appeal, the plaintiffs sought attorney fees for their post-trial work as well as for appellate work. The trial court awarded fees for the appellate phase but not for the post-trial phase and both par-

ties appealed.

On appeal, Royal Crown argued that the trial court did not have authority to award attorney fees and that the attorney fee award was unreasonable. Plaintiffs challenged the trial court's denial of fees for their post-trial work. The Supreme Court affirmed the trial court's amended judgment.

Regarding the trial court's award of attorney fees for appellate work, the Supreme Court held that the trial court had the authority to award attorney fees. The Supreme Court also upheld the trial court's award of attorney fees because its reasonableness determination came from reviewing the plaintiffs' billing summaries and comparing the hourly rates of plaintiffs' counsel to those charged by other attorneys in the Commonwealth.

As for the trial court's denial of post-trial attorney fees, the Supreme Court held that the trial court applied the wrong legal standard in denying the fees. Despite the trial court's use of the wrong standard, the Supreme Court still upheld the denial of fees because it deemed the plaintiffs' fee request untimely. Pointing to a local rule requiring fee motions to be filed with 14 days of the entry of judgment, the High Court held that the plaintiffs' request for post-trial attorney fees—which they filed five years after the original entry of judgment—was filed too late.

The Supreme Court's full opinion is *Ishimatsu v. Royal Crown Ins. Corp.*, 2012 MP 17, and can be found at http://www.cnmilaw.org/supreme_12.htm. (NMI Judiciary)

As the Holiday Season closes another year,
our thoughts turn gratefully to
you our valued business associates.

In the spirit of the Season, we sincerely say,

**Thank you for your
trust and patronage.**

**Best Wishes for the Holidays and
A Happy and Prosperous New Year!**

– the staff and management of

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Draft Mariana range complex EA available

SANTA RITA, Guam—The U.S. Navy has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment/Overseas Environmental Assessment to analyze potential environmental impacts from proposed modifications to training airspace and sea space in the Mariana Islands Range Complex. The document is now available for public review and comment for a 45-day public comment period, from Dec. 20, 2012, to Feb. 4, 2013.

The Navy's Proposed Action is to modify and extend military training airspace and sea space within the MIRC. This action is needed to provide a safer and more efficient training environment and to maintain military readiness.

The Navy analyzed the po-

ON THE NET

www.MIRCAirspaceEA.com

SUBMITTING COMMENTS

Comments may be submitted online, by mail or at the public outreach meetings. Written comments may be submitted to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific
Attention: MIRC Airspace EA/OEA Project Manager
258 Makalapa Drive, Suite 100
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860-3134

tential environmental impacts of three alternatives in the Draft EA/OEA.

The Navy conducted a thorough assessment of environmental resources to determine the potential effects from the Proposed Action and alternatives. The

draft assessment indicates there would be no significant impact on the environment from proposed modifications to airspace and sea space.

The Navy is holding two public outreach sessions during which Navy representatives will staff poster stations

and be available to answer questions about the Proposed Action and the Draft EA/OEA. Attendees are encouraged to provide written and/or verbal comments on the analysis at the sessions or any time during the public comment period. On Saipan, the open house information session will be held on Jan. 17, 2013, Thursday, at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

Copies of the Draft EA/OEA are available for public review online at www.MIRCAirspaceEA.com and at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library (Saipan); Tinian Public Library; and Rota Public Library.

Comments must be postmarked or received by Feb. 4, 2013, for consideration in the Final EA/OEA. (PR)

As the Holiday Season is upon us, we find ourselves reflecting on the past year and on those who have helped to shape our business in a most significant way. We value our relationship with you and look forward to working with you in the year to come.

*Have a safe and peaceful
New Year to all!*



Tan Holdings

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Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Dec. 31, 1999

DPH: Public health is a public concern

The year 2001 saw the problem to close the Puerto Rico dumpsite hanging as the bidding process for the Marpi Solid Waste Facility moved at a snail's pace, while public health—not just the economy—were threatened by bioterrorism as the nation stepped to a new era of war on terrorism. This, as the Department of Public Health intensified campaign on disease prevention against diabetes, among others, as it hopes to recover from indebtedness in connection with its medical referrals to Hawaii. Besides this, most Saipan residents had to contend with buying bottled drinking water as the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation's supply remain to be not potable. These problems—and how they will be addressed and the solutions sustained—are among the major concerns on health and environment that the Commonwealth will be dealing with come year 2002, authorities said.

Chamber backs repeal of moratorium law

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted unanimously to support House Bill 12-415, which would repeal Public law 11-6 or the CNMI Moratorium Act. The Chamber reiterated its opposition to any form of a moratorium on the hiring and entry of qualified nonresident employees for job vacancies where no resident local workers are qualified and available to fill the positions. "Public Law 11-6 is no longer needed. For that matter, it was never needed. That original law was passed on the way to Washington, DC, with a laundry list of others, to appease perceived federal concern over labor and immigration matters in the CNMI," said Chamber President Richard A. Pierce.

Dec. 31, 2002

Payment nears for land compensation claims

Landowners can finally receive their long overdue payments from the CNMI government anytime now, after Gov. Juan N. Babauta yesterday signed the Land Compensation Rules and Regulations and referred it to the Commonwealth Registrar for urgent promulgation. The approval and publication of the regulations are required so the government can release the money to landowners. According to MPLA Commissioner Henry Hofsneider, Babauta signed the regulations following review and approval of the guidelines by the Attorney General's Office.

MPLA firm vs land title transfer to CPA

Both unwavering in what they believe is the "best" for the Commonwealth, the Marianas Public Lands Authority and the Commonwealth Ports Authority show no signs of yielding to either position. Yesterday, the MPLA said it asked the CPA anew to identify which portions of public lands in Puerto Rico it wants to be designated first for its ports operations. However, MPLA Commissioner Henry Hofsneider insisted that the CPA will not get land titles. "We can grant them only use rights, they will not get title to the property or ownership. You know, those lands belong to those of NMI descendants."

Dec. 31, 2003

Tighter screening at Saipan airport

The Transportation Security Administration-Saipan Office has stepped up security screening procedures at the Saipan International Airport in light of the heightened alert issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. TSA-Saipan Office Customer Support and Quality Improvement manager Viola R. Sablan said that in response to the U.S. government's raising of the national threat level from "elevated" to "high risk"—or from Code Yellow to Code Orange—TSA has beefed up security screening procedures at the island's airport to ensure the traveling public's safety. Sablan added that all federal security screeners are carefully monitoring all baggage—both carry-on and checked-in luggage—to be sure that no contraband or high-risk items are carried on board.

MPLA appeals court order on ex-commissioner

The Marianas Public Lands Authority has appealed a recent court decision favoring the motion of the complainant, former MPLA commissioner Bertha Deleon Guerrero, for access to information under the Freedom of Information Act. This ruling actually entitles Deleon Guerrero to receive payment from MPLA for her attorney fees, estimated to reach up to \$18,000. Instead of paying, however, the MPLA went ahead with its appeal. "We're appealing that decision," said MPLA commissioner Henry S. Hofsneider.

Fiesta Resort staff serenade sick kids

Volunteers from Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan paid a visit to the children at CHC's Pediatric Ward on Dec. 21, 2012, singing Christmas carols and spreading holiday cheer to the sick patients. The result? Even though they were feeling under the weather, the children at CHC had smiles on their faces as they got to hear classic holiday songs

like *Jingle Bells*, *Joy to the World*, *Feliz Navidad*, and many more. The volunteers also gave the children Santa hats filled with various gifts and goodies.

Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan is proud to sponsor a strong spirit of volunteerism, dedicating ourselves to bringing joy and betterment to the community. A special thanks goes out to



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Volunteers from Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan have their picture taken at the hotel's lobby before paying a visit to the children at CHC's Pediatric Ward on Dec. 21, 2012. The group sang Christmas carols for the children at the hospital.

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- Cheesecake**
Refrigerated Cheese Cake, Baked Cheese Cake, Creamy Cheese Cake
- Rolls**
Chocolate Rolls, Mocha Rolls, Pumpkin Rolls

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Marg's Kitchen is located north of Mt. Carmel Cathedral.
Tel: 234-3706

Christmas Cookies are also available

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR

MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Rising life spans— despite some unhealthy choices

There's good news in a new and certifiable global trend: More elderly people are dying of cancer and heart disease.

That may not sound like good news, and in one obvious sense it isn't. But before you can die in old age of so-called "rich-country" ailments like these, you have to survive many decades. That so many people are doing so represents a huge achievement.

The evidence comes in a new report produced by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington. It offers a lot of reasons to cheer.

First, infectious diseases kill far fewer people globally today than they did just two decades ago. Diarrhea, tuberculosis, malaria and measles have all dropped in the rankings of top causes of death. Better sanitation, greater availability of medicines and wider inoculations have played crucial roles.

Malnutrition is also subsiding. As living standards rise in poor nations, adequate food supplies become available to more and more people. In 1981, 70 percent of the people in developing nations lived on less than \$2 a day. Now, that share of the populace in those countries is down to 43 percent. And while malnutrition in 1990 was the world's top risk factor for deaths and years of life lost, by 2010 it had dropped to eighth.

In the aggregate, then, children in particular are remarkably less vulnerable than they used to be. Since 1990, the death rate of kids younger than age 5 has declined by some 60 percent.

Here is an odd but definite sign of progress in the effort to reduce poverty: More people now die from obesity-related illnesses than from lack of food.

The progress has not been uniform across the globe. Sub-Saharan Africa suffers disproportionately from childhood illnesses and lethal infections, including AIDS. But even there, the average age at death has risen by 10 years since 1970: As more children survive—other effects in a society remaining static—the average age of all its deaths rises. In North Africa, Latin America and Asia, the increase since 1970 in the age of death has been more than 25 years.

As causes of death shift from infectious to non-communicable diseases, AIDS is a global outlier: It may have peaked, but its effect remains steady, claiming some 1.5 million lives worldwide every year.

It's heartening to know that big, positive changes can occur in places that were sometimes seen as hopeless. The measures that have brought about this progress can be reinforced and expanded to make sure it continues.

But there is some bad news. Millions of people still die prematurely from diseases linked to the choices they make—on things like smoking, eating and exercising. The increase in lifestyle-related diseases means that while people are living longer, many of them are also living sicker and requiring more medical treatment, which drives up costs.

That's the unfortunate price of progress against all sorts of ailments that kill young and old alike. But the progress is real, and it's welcome.

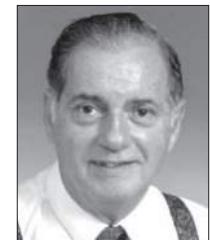
©2012 Chicago Tribune



My year-end personal inventory

By ANTHONY PELLEGRINO

Special to the Saipan Tribune



Pellegrino is a longtime businessman in the CNMI and is a former president of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.

6. Basically, what did I give of myself to better the society I live in?

D. FAMILY/PARENT RELATIONSHIP

1. Make sure spouse and children are properly cared for daily.
2. Shower love and praise on them.
3. Encourage spouse and children to strive to improve themselves.
4. Make everyday meaningful and spend some time together.
5. Never argue in front of the children.
6. Become involved in each family member's interests.

These are only a few of the questions and suggestions we should ask ourselves as we take inventory of what we did the past year. The next question we should ask ourselves: Will I do better this New Year or will I just remain the same as last year? Will I just continue to vegetate? Will I be able to look in the mirror and be proud of my developments at the end of 2013? Or will I feed only my stomach?

A helpful suggestion is to write the New Year's resolutions on paper and put it into an envelope and seal it. Then at the end of

June open the envelope and read what you wrote back in January. See if you are still on track to your resolutions. Have you neglected what you promised to do or are you on target? When you review them in June, you still have half a year to improve yourself. Unless we do this we will simply forget the resolutions and do nothing to improve ourselves.

It's sad how few of us really take our life direction seriously. We seem to be floating as in a stream. We don't seem to care wherever the stream flows or how fast or how slowly it flows. We just drift aimlessly in it. Finally when we hit an embankment, we cannot figure out why it happened to us. Then to justify our failures we blame others for our misfortune. We never seem to ask ourselves: Why aren't I succeeding better in life? What am I doing that I am failing?

Someone once said to me: "Some men die at 25 years old, but are not buried until 75 years old." Am I one of them? My friend, it is not too late to wake up and start living.

Success has been defined as the "progressive realization of a worthy goal." Let us define our goals and begin our journey toward our "progressive goals." Take the personal inventory above and listen to the answers truthfully. Determine that this New Year will be the best one we have ever had. A better road awaits!

Before we part let us recall this prayer written by Wayne Dosick and inspired by St. Francis Assisi:

See YEAR-END on Next Page

A. PERSONAL LIFE

1. What did I do on 2012 to improve myself?
2. Did I read any books to learn something?
3. Did I seek out new ideas and use them?
4. What did I do to improve my relations with my spouse, children, and friends?
5. Did I learn any new hobbies or acquire new interests?
6. What did I do to broaden my mental and spiritual character?
7. What did I do to become a better person?
8. Did I merely consume mountains of meat, rice and beer, thereby expanding only my waistline?

B. BUSINESS AND WORK LIFE

1. Did I study how to improve my business or work habits?
2. Did I seek better relations with my customers and fellow employees?
3. Did I learn about new methods for doing my work smarter, not harder?
4. Did I do the same thing throughout the year and just curse the bad business climate?
5. Did I merely complain about the lousy work I have to do without trying to improve my attitude?
6. In plain words, what did I do to become a better employer or a better employee?

C. SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

1. Did I attend any meetings of clubs or associations?
2. Did I participate in the religious life of the community?
3. Did I reach out and help those less fortunate than me?
4. Did I involve myself with the social problems that beset the community?
5. What charitable and voluntary work did I do in the community?

The way we are

By JAIME VERGARA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Jaime R. Vergara (jrvergarajr2031@aol.com) is a former PSS teacher and is currently writing from the campus of Shenyang Aerospace University in China.



Whitney Houston's *One Moment in Time* was our song with 40-some graduate aggies lassoed to apply their learned skills in watershed resource management projects in three Visayan provinces in the Philippines in the late '80s. We caught the spirit of the song from the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics.

The song solidified the groups' resolve to expend their individual and corporate lives on a task perceived critical to devastated upland agriculture, deforested tropical hills and plains, overly chemical-laden fields, and depleted mangrove and nearshore fisheries.

It was a marvelous three-year intervention, our city shoes trekking through island interiors. We even had the staff of one site sue

Raucous 2012 in review

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands.



The receding year is one horrific chapter in our developmental history—raucous, strife-ridden, riddled with corruption, and a myriad of fiscal cliffs ready for diving when we're literally and completely bankrupt! It's all disorienting and often leaves nothing but blurred prism and uncertainty about the future.

The most controversial was the failed impeachment of the governor. But the servile "Ben Ten" equally failed to slaughter the ghostly beast with finality. It came roaring back a two-headed corn snake, still alive and crawled quickly into the two legislative chambers in search of rodents.

In addressing these events, let me also dwell on my personal hope and vision of what we could undertake, albeit difficult they may be, to change the course of history here. After all, there's no one else around here except us!

Often in the face of multiple dilemmas, we quiz what went wrong and how quickly we're caught flat-footed in the midst of very disorienting chain of events. As we struggle to make sense of it all, a big question still looms on the horizon: What can policymakers (both sides of the street) collectively do to prevent a repeat of history over the long haul? Perhaps the best place to start is to acknowledge what we cannot do.

If the listless economy has taught policymakers (both branches of government) anything in recent years, it is the need for humility, according to N. Mankiw, professor of economics at Harvard University.

The term "humility" definitely needs more than just informal discussion. It means embracing your "true north" with mindfulness of the task before you. So it might be worth stepping back and assessing what we know and what we don't. Let's start with several propositions about which there is little doubt:

■ The economy has crash-landed in the sea of paralysis. There are various components requiring critical planning and review for purposes of long-term prosperity.

■ Tourism is a fickle industry. Do we continue pumping more money into it at the expense of developing farming, fishing, and cottage

us in court for falling short on our vaunted support promises. We trained them too well. I was in agreement with the suit brought against me since I was president of the sponsoring NGO for the projects. I moved back to the U.S. before the case was resolved. I found out later that our charity foundation lost, and I was not too unhappy!

This is our last reflection as a regular opinion writer for the *Saipan Tribune*. We shall not make the "thank you" to the publisher, staff, and readers, a long process. We did have a special niche for Ruth Tighe's brand of social commentaries. We consign our literary output, as is, into history, in her name.

We shared on the day before Christmas our curriculum vitae from womb-to-tomb. Not your regular CV, we took the "one moment in time" metaphor to describe a lifetime—in our case, all 86 years of it—charted in five life stages, projected as witness to our description of every human soul that comes into this earth. "I am, like each of us, one, unique, unrepeatable gift of life into human history. There has never been one like me before, and there will never be another one like me ever again." That whole but single journey is my one moment in time!

Most of our university classrooms are designed for lecture deliveries, and students expect that format in all their classes. When they come to mine, where pedagogy follows the "kill the teacher" motif in order to make the classroom a student-centered affair, they encounter structured time/space/role/story sessions where students

industries? Would not a major cultural center compliment tourism in large measure? Tourism, while a major industry, is a component of the overall economy. Some insightful forward-looking plan is definitely in order to revive it beyond conventional wisdom.

■ The exodus of foreign capital in recent past drained the CNMI of some \$7 billion that was once recycled locally. Have we taken a proactive review of punitive and stifling policy matters that have forced our partners to think with their feet? Is it hard allowing their assimilation into our community?

■ What have we done to develop farming and fishing into strong sectors of the local economy? The CNMI had resounding success in these sectors before the hostilities of WWII. Is Sabalu Market the answer? Indeed, we know the answer and it's all a matter of serious organization involving all key sectors, isn't it?

■ Utility rates have forced a lot of businesses, locally and foreign-owned, to put up shutters. It will continue to be the unwelcome gorilla on the back of businesses for as long as rates remain prohibitively high. Whatever happened to exploration of alternative energy like geothermal? If this isn't domesticated, a lot more foreign capital entrepreneurs will use their feet in search of greener pastures.

■ Punitive and stifling policies have equally done a lot of damage slamming expansionary efforts. In fact, it exacted the complete opposite—contractionary in all that policymakers have failed to see before approving more shallow policies, raising fees and taxes. The lack of equal protection has definitely scared investors. Isn't this an issue to revisit sooner than later?

■ The Fund is headed toward a fiscal cliff, preparing for an avalanche by March of 2014. Unless financial analysts and investment experts are given a free hand to overhaul it, it would dive off the cliff by 2014. Using pension obligation bond isn't our holy grail for it isn't, in any shape of form, a "corresponding contribution" designed to scaffold the fund into realistic sustainability. Salary cap too is a must, setting of a retirement age, including passing a greater portion of pension and health insurance costs to all players.

What can policymakers do to stoke animal spirits and encourage businesses to invest? Lack of investment spending is a large part of our economy's current difficulties, but capital investments are always made with an eye toward the future. The best fix for our short-term problems may be to focus on policies that will foster long-term growth as well.

■ ■ ■

2013: Shift in leadership

It's painful listening to the battered voices of villagers yearning for something beyond negligence and arrogance. They had to endure over six years of grand failure under a "do-nothing" Republican incumbency. To use the term "leadership" would be a violation of diction, given the obvious.

People now demand "industrious as ants-leadership" that could use their sense of integrity, humility, and mindfulness to guide rebuilding these isles from the ravages of neglect. They no longer could stand the consistent and persistent slide in its livelihood to subterranean misery.

The eventual change in leadership at the pinnacle of the pecking order would present new challenges, from negligence to picking up the pieces to starting anew. Such challenge would temporarily turn into a source of uncertainty, but it should equally be viewed as a powerful source of opportunity to begin making a difference.

The trashing of trust derails timely and insightful decisions on matters of state importance. This wasn't the prize it sought two years ago when it renewed the term of this administration.

Can the CNMI still make a transition from no growth to something robust to dispel uncertainties over the domestic fiscal situation and cataclysmic economic conditions at home? There's nothing but fatal cliffs everywhere, ready to devour the entire archipelago. Be that as it may, have a good one on New Year's Eve!

YEAR-END

From Page 10

Prayer For the World!

Where there is Hatred, May I bring Love,
Where there is Pain, May I bring Healing.
Where there is Darkness, May I bring Light,
Where there is Despair, May I bring Hope.
Where there is Discord, May I bring Harmony.
Where there is Strife, May I bring Peace.
Make this a better world and Begin with Me.

Again, I wish each and every one a fabulous Happy New Year! May 2013 bring each of us the happiness and prosperity we long for! Keep smiling!

meet themselves ("it's a pleasure to meet me"), bump into their classmates "again for the first time," get mentally and gracefully assaulted by a teacher, and gnawed at their awareness by printed speeches and writings of prominent persons.

Maps plastered against the walls broaden perspectives. Aired songs engage the neglected receptacle of hearing and listening, and repeating. We go for the ease and comfort of sounds becoming familiar before we divert attention to words seen, then seek out how they are used. We let students read out loud what others had written before we invite them to write their own. Many encounters occur at many levels of consciousness.

One of the rituals I go through before each start of the class, after chairs and desks are rearranged so that the focus is on the center of the room while clusters of four students are around one of eight or nine squared tables, is to put a table cloth on a single desk in the middle of the room.

The cloth is a scarf not unlike what Yasser Arafat's Palestinian head wore. I place a broken coffee cup at the center with rice strewn around it in a circle. The cup's broken handle and rim chip are added, with shards of very old pagoda tiles mixed in. A Chinese hand fan leans against the chipped lip of the cup. A couple of whole walnuts sit atop the rice while local conch shells from Bo Hai guard the sides. Chopsticks stay by their lonesome at the edge. Once in a while, a paper rose protrudes from the cup.

The class is only too polite to ask why the crazy (*shen jing ping*) teacher does this regular routine.

At the end of the semester, I finally talk about the centerpiece. "The decor is not to make the room more beautiful," I say. It is an art form to represent who I am and how I live. It is way of telling my story.

I am like the broken cup, well crafted but fragile. In this case, broken. The rice looks inviting but it is useless unless it is cooked. That entails heat. The intricate shell takes a lot of mollusk saliva to create but the cask is casually cast away after the content is consumed. The fan reveals how unfair life is. The Chinese worker who makes it gets paid a minuscule amount for time and talent compared to what Korean, German, and Japanese counterparts make to assemble electronics. The walnut has to be cracked to be of any good to anyone. After six decades, I have to learn to use a chopstick to survive. On top of it all, sometimes a fake rose gets to preside.

"That pretty much tells the story of my life," I say. But it is the only life I have. I can live it, or throw it away. (Then it dawns on the class where my listen-repeat start of each session comes from.)

So, for the last time, the class repeats after me: "This is the day we have. We can live this day, or throw it away. This is the day we have." It's the way we are!

Thanks, y'all.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Serious ramifications

We commend Triple J in their efforts to look for new opportunities to develop the CNMI. However, we cannot in good conscience support their application into the QC program at this time. We find several reasons to protest their application into the program. Firstly, the CNMI has an increasingly deteriorating revenue problem. We are reminded everyday by our local papers how badly our island needs revenues to fund the rehabilitation of our collapsing public services. It was just this past month when our only hospital was on the cusp of losing Medicare coverage due to the state of disrepair of their medical services. These revenue issues also extend to our ailing infrastructure. The rainy season reminds us all of how fragile our roads and sewage systems can be if we do not devote the funds to improve them. If we are to approve this application, it is in essence giving these services away for free for 25 years. Is this in the best interests of the CNMI? In short, we believe that economic benefit should not come at the expense of the people. We urge CDA to carefully study the long-term impact of this tax haven.

Secondly, we believe that the QC program in general needs further review by the CDA and the Legislature in light of the tightening revenue streams of the government, especially if it means giving business tax breaks for the next 25 years. As businesses we understand that any major investment decision involves taking risks. The QC program acts as a hedge against these risks, but at the same time creates an unfair advantage to competitors and discourages newer investors. Will it be the expectation of people of the CNMI that businesses will not entertain us without the guarantee of a 25-year tax benefit?

We do not intend to undermine the development plans of any company but we believe it is absolutely necessary to bring our concerns of the QC program to the attention of the stakeholders of the CNMI. There are serious ramifications that we all must consider before we decide to move forward with approval with this or any other application into the program.

Bo Palacios

Business Development Manager
JC Tenorio Enterprises

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
				
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly sunny and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲ 87° ▼ 76°	▲ 86° ▼ 76°	▲ 86° ▼ 76°	▲ 86° ▼ 76°	▲ 87° ▼ 76°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Thundershowers	▲ 87 ▼ 79
Palau	Showers	▲ 85 ▼ 79
Yap	Mostly Sunny	▲ 88 ▼ 79
Chuuk	Showers	▲ 87 ▼ 81
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	▲ 86 ▼ 80
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	▲ 86 ▼ 80
Majuro	Showers	▲ 87 ▼ 82

Around The Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲ 72 ▼ 63
Beijing	Sunny	▲ 28 ▼ 7
Hong Kong	Cloudy	▲ 56 ▼ 53
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	▲ 78 ▼ 70
London	Showers	▲ 54 ▼ 39
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲ 61 ▼ 43
Manila	Partly Cloudy	▲ 87 ▼ 79
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	▲ 79 ▼ 54
Miami	Cloudy	▲ 72 ▼ 64
New York	Partly Cloudy	▲ 34 ▼ 29
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	▲ 45 ▼ 36
Paris	Cloudy	▲ 52 ▼ 45
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	▲ 46 ▼ 29
Rome	Sunny	▲ 55 ▼ 37
Salem	Mostly Cloudy	▲ 42 ▼ 34
San Francisco	Sunny	▲ 57 ▼ 44
Seoul	Snow	▲ 32 ▼ 15
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	▲ 46 ▼ 36
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	▲ 42 ▼ 36

Tides

Sunrise/Sunset			Moonrise/Moonset		
Today	6:43 AM	5:57 PM	Today	8:22 PM	8:27 AM
Tuesday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM	Tuesday	9:12 PM	9:09 AM
Wednesday	6:44 AM	5:58 PM	Wednesday	10:03 PM	9:49 AM
Thursday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM	Thursday	10:54 PM	10:29 AM
Friday	6:44 AM	6:00 PM	Friday	11:47 PM	11:10 AM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

■ ISLAND SNAPSHTOS

Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.

■ BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.

■ BUSINESS

Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.

■ SAMUT SARI

Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.

■ TRAVELOGUE

Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.

■ CAMPUS BULLETIN

Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when),

the name of contact person, and a phone number.

- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan

To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

- The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to accept or reject a contribution for publication; the right to edit all contributions, the date of publication, size of the picture, and page placement; and the right to publish contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats.
- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.

- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DEC. 14, 2012

DEPARTURES	ARRIVALS
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GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN
UA5070 4:35am 5:25am 2, 4, 6, 7
UA5062 4:40am 5:30am 1, 3, 5
UA5068 8:25am 9:15am Daily
UA5074 11:10am 12:00pm 1, 4, 5, 7
UA5076 3:10pm 4:00pm Daily
UA5078 6:55pm 7:45pm Daily
UA5072 9:45pm 10:35pm Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN
DL287 6:00am 8:40am Daily
DL297 4:25pm 7:20pm Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)
OZ608 3:10am 6:20am 4, 6, 7
OZ608 3:30am 6:40am 3

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)
OZ606 2:10am 6:00am 1
OZ606 2:40am 6:30am 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ604 3:20pm 7:10pm Daily

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)
3U8648 6:10am 8:40am 1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)
MU7108 4:05am 5:55am 1, 3, 5

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN
3U8645 7:40pm 3:00am+1 1, 5

VLADIVOSTOK (VVO)-SAIPAN
VLK1733 8:00pm 12:05am+1 4 every other week

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN
OZ704/603 12:10am 2:20pm Daily via ICN
DL172/288 8:00am 1:15am+1 Daily via NRT
UA190/5077 10:55am 6:25pm 3, 6 via GUM
DL287/173 6:00am 10:20pm Daily via NRT
UA190/5079 10:55am 9:10pm 3, 6 via GUM
OZ702/605 12:30pm 1:00am+1 7 via ICN
OZ702/605 12:30pm 1:30am+1 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA190/5076/183 3:10pm 9:25pm 2, 5 via GUM
UA190/5076/183 3:10pm 9:45pm 1, 3, 4, 6,

Business

Top business story in '12: Sluggish global economy



This would be the year when the global economy finally regained its vigor. At least that's what many had hoped.

It didn't happen.

The three largest economies—the United States, China and Japan—struggled again in 2012. The 17 countries that use the euro endured a third painful year in their financial crisis and slid into recession. Emerging economies slowed.

President Barack Obama defied predictions by sailing to re-election. And his landmark health care plan surprisingly survived Supreme Court review. Obama's re-election triggered a face-off with Republicans over averting the "fiscal cliff"—the drastic spending cuts and tax increases that were set to kick in Jan. 1.

The tech world dueled over smartphones and tablets and saw Facebook's IPO sour as fast as it had sizzled. The housing market inched toward recovery. And Americans suffered both a catastrophic drought and a catastrophic superstorm.

Least surprisingly, perhaps, another gallery of rogues brought investigative scrutiny to Wall Street.

The achingly slow global economic recovery was chosen as the top business story of the year by business editors at The Associated Press. The U.S. presidential election came in second, followed by the Supreme Court's upholding Obama's health-care plan.

1. THE GLOBAL ECONOMY: Worldwide growth was slack again in 2012. The

global economy grew just 3.3 percent, down from 3.8 percent in 2011 and 5.1 percent in 2010, the International Monetary Fund estimates. The U.S. economy, the world's largest, failed to gain traction. Five years after a recession seized the economy and more than three years after it ended, growth in the United States was only about 2 percent. Unemployment remained a high 7.7 percent.

Europe fared worse. Its finan-

cial crisis did stabilize, thanks in part to the European Central Bank's plan to buy government bonds to help countries manage their debts. But the euro alliance sank into recession. Europeans, in turn, held back China, the world's No. 2 economy, by cutting back on Chinese goods. China's economy grew at a 7.4 percent annual rate in the July-September quarter. Though a scorching pace for developed countries, that marked a 3 1/2-year low for China. And at

year's end, Japan's economy, the world's third-largest, was shrinking.

2. U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: Obama vaulted to a re-election victory over Mitt Romney, who had staked his bid on the weakest U.S. economic rebound since the Great Depression and had pledged to slash taxes. Unemployment under Obama topped 8 percent for 43 straight months.

Yet he won despite the highest unemployment rate of any

president seeking re-election since World War II. Voters assigned him higher marks on the economy as the year progressed, perhaps encouraged by job gains. As the fiscal cliff neared, Obama fought to raise taxes on the highest-earning Americans. He also demanded aid for the long-term unemployed and money for roads, bridges and other infrastructure. Economists raised hopes that if the fiscal cliff was averted, the gloom would lift in Obama's second term.

3. OBAMA HEALTH CARE PLAN UPHELD: The

Supreme Court caught many by surprise when it backed Obama administration's health care reform in a 5-4 vote. The law requires Americans to buy insurance or pay a tax, while subsidizing the needy. Hospitals and health insurers will likely benefit from 30 million new customers. Medical device makers, though, will face a new sales tax. And some small businesses say the law will discourage hiring because it requires companies to provide health care once they employ more than 50.

See TOP on Next Page



Greetings from

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Kanoa Resort New Year's Eve COUNTDOWN 2013

Dec. 31, 2012 ; BEACHSIDE NEW YEAR'S EVE COUNTDOWN

6:00pm-9:00pm : Dinner BBQ Buffet

Includes delicious appetizers, poke and sushi, barbecued shortribs/chicken/sausage/prawn/fish, lechon, incredible desserts, and much much more!

\$29.00 Adult ● \$20.00 Child

10:00pm-12:00mn : Countdown Open Bar \$15.00 w/ Cocktail Food
Open bar includes beer, wine, champagne, juice, and soft drinks.

MUSIC: 6:00-8:00pm /10:00pm-12:00 midnight

FIREWORKS: 12:00 midnight

Kanoa Resort
Saipan

For inquiries or reservation please call 234-6601 ext. 301/302

Nation

Desert Storm commander Norman Schwarzkopf dies

WASHINGTON (AP)—Truth is, retired Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf didn't care much for his popular "Stormin' Norman" nickname.

The seemingly no-nonsense Desert Storm commander's reputed temper with aides and subordinates supposedly earned him that rough-and-ready moniker. But others around the general, who died Thursday in Tampa, Fla., at age 78 of complications from pneumonia, knew him as a friendly, talkative and even jovial figure who preferred the somewhat milder sobriquet given by his troops: "The Bear."

That one perhaps suited him better later in his life, when he supported various national causes and children's charities while eschewing the spotlight and resisting efforts to draft him to run for political office.

He lived out a quiet retirement in Tampa, where he'd served his last military assignment and where an elementary school bearing his name is testament to his standing in the community.

Schwarzkopf capped an illustrious military career by commanding the U.S.-led international coalition that drove Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait in 1991—but he'd managed to keep a low profile in the public debate over the second Gulf War against Iraq, saying at one point that he doubted victory would be as easy as the White House and the Pentagon predicted.

Schwarzkopf was named commander in chief of U.S. Central Command at Tampa's MacDill Air Force Base in 1988, overseeing the headquarters for U.S. military and security concerns in nearly two dozen countries stretching across the Middle East to Afghanistan and the rest of central Asia, plus Pakistan.



In this Jan. 12, 1991 file photo, Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf stands at ease with his tank troops during Operation Desert Storm in Saudi Arabia. Schwarzkopf died Thursday, Dec. 27, 2012 in Tampa, Fla. He was 78.

When Saddam invaded Kuwait two years later to punish it for allegedly stealing Iraqi oil reserves, Schwarzkopf commanded Operation Desert Storm, the coalition of some 30 countries organized by President George H.W. Bush that succeeded in driving the Iraqis out.

At the peak of his postwar national celebrity, Schwarzkopf—a self-proclaimed political independent—rejected suggestions that he run for office, and remained far more private than other generals, although he did serve briefly as a military commentator for NBC. While focused primarily on charitable enterprises in his later years, he campaigned for President George W. Bush in 2000, but was ambivalent about the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In early 2003 he told The

Washington Post that the outcome was an unknown: "What is postwar Iraq going to look like, with the Kurds and the Sunnis and the Shiites? That's a huge question, to my mind. It really should be part of the overall campaign plan."

Initially Schwarzkopf had endorsed the invasion, saying he was convinced that Secretary of State Colin Powell had given the United Nations powerful evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. After that proved false, he said decisions to go to war should depend on what U.N. weapons inspectors found.

He seldom spoke up during the conflict, but in late 2004 he sharply criticized Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and the Pentagon for mistakes that included erroneous judgments about Iraq and inadequate train-

ing for Army reservists sent there. "In the final analysis I think we are behind schedule. ... I don't think we counted on it turning into jihad (holy war)," he said in an NBC interview.

Schwarzkopf was born Aug. 24, 1934, in Trenton, N.J., where his father, Col. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, founder and commander of the New Jersey State Police, was then leading the investigation of the Lindbergh kidnap case. That investigation ended with the arrest and 1936 execution of German-born carpenter Richard Hauptmann for murdering famed aviator Charles Lindbergh's infant son.

The elder Schwarzkopf was named Herbert, but when the son was asked what his "H" stood for, he would reply, "H."

As a teenager Norman accompanied his father to Iran,

where the elder Schwarzkopf trained the Iran's national police force and was an adviser to Reza Pahlavi, the young Shah of Iran.

Young Norman studied there and in Switzerland, Germany and Italy, then followed in his father's footsteps to West Point, graduating in 1956 with an en-



Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr.

U.S. four-star general led allied Persian Gulf campaign

Early life

Born 1934, Trenton, N.J.

Education Engineering degrees from West Point and USC

Military career

1966-68 Adviser in South Vietnam; promoted to major; three Silver Stars for valor, Bronze Star, Purple Heart

1968 Teaches at West Point; promoted to lieutenant colonel

1969 Back in Vietnam as battalion commander; risks his life to save men trapped in a mine field

1971 Returns to U.S. with significant injuries

1978 Promoted to rank of brigadier general

1983 Leads ground forces in invasion of Grenada

1988 Becomes four-star general, commander of U.S. Army Central Command

1990-91 Commander in Chief of allied forces during Operation Desert Shield/Storm; coalition liberates Kuwait from Iraqi forces

1992 Retires from U.S. Army

Dec. 27, 2012 Dies at age 78

© 2012 MCT

Source: Academy of Achievement, AP, MCT Photo Service

gineering degree. After stints in the U.S. and abroad, he earned a master's degree in engineering at the University of Southern California and later taught missile engineering at West Point.

In 1966 he volunteered for Vietnam and served two tours, first as a U.S. adviser to South Vietnamese paratroops and later as a battalion commander in the U.S. Army's Americal Division. He earned three Silver Stars for valor—including one for saving troops from a minefield—plus a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and three Distinguished Service Medals.

While many career officers left military service embittered by Vietnam, Schwarzkopf was among those who opted to stay and help rebuild the tattered Army into a potent, modernized all-volunteer force. After Saddam invaded Kuwait in August 1990, Schwarzkopf played a key diplomatic role by helping persuade Saudi Arabia's King Fahd to allow U.S. and other foreign troops to deploy on Saudi territory as a staging area for the war to come.

On Jan. 17, 1991, a five-month buildup called Desert Shield became Operation Desert Storm as allied aircraft attacked Iraqi bases and Baghdad government facilities. The six-week aerial campaign climaxed with a massive ground offensive on Feb. 24-28, routing the Iraqis from Kuwait in 100 hours before U.S. officials called a halt.

Schwarzkopf said afterward he agreed with Bush's decision to stop the war rather than drive to Baghdad to capture Saddam, as his mission had been only to oust the Iraqis from Kuwait.

But in a desert tent meeting with vanquished Iraqi generals, he allowed a key concession on Iraq's use of helicopters, which later backfired by enabling Saddam to crack down more easily on rebellious Shiites and Kurds.

WARS: Competition in mobile technology intensified. Apple maintained its worldwide dominance. But the use of Google's Android software on competing smartphones and tablets spread faster than Apple's market share. Forty-four percent of U.S. adults own smartphones, up from about 35 percent a year ago. Tablet ownership doubled in 2012. Taking on Apple's iPad, Microsoft unleashed its Surface tablet and began selling Windows 8, a tablet-friendly operating system. Amazon and Barnes & Noble rushed out high-definition-screen tablets. Each priced its premium model less than the entry-level iPad. Apple struck back with the iPad Mini. Struggling to compete, once-formidable Nokia and BlackBerry-maker Research In Motion floundered.

TOP

From Page 13

4. THE FISCAL CLIFF: A dreaded package of tax increases and deep spending cuts to domestic and defense programs loomed over the economy in the year's final months. Negotiators struggled to forge a budget deal to avert those measures. If they failed, the tax increases and spending cuts would kick in Jan. 1. That threat was intended to be so chilling that it would force Congress and the White House to take the painful budgetary steps needed to avoid it. Economists warned that if the fiscal cliff measures remained in place for much of 2013, they would cause a recession.

5. FACEBOOK's IPO: Years of anticipation led to Facebook's initial public offer-

ing of stock—the hottest Internet IPO since Google's in 2004. Many of the billion or so users of the world's largest online social network craved a chance to buy in early. On the eve of its first trading day, Facebook's market value was \$104 billion—more than Amazon.com's or McDonald's at the time. Yet the IPO bombed. Its debut was marred by technical glitches with the Nasdaq exchange, allegations that a revenue gap wasn't publicly disclosed and complaints that the IPO had been priced too high. Traders lost confidence fast. Within three months, Facebook's stock had shed more than half its IPO value.

6. HOUSING RECOVERY: After a six-year slump that sent more than 4 million homes into foreclosure and shrank home prices about one-third nation-

wide, the U.S. housing market began to recover in mid-year. Modest job gains and record-low mortgage rates fueled demand. And the supply of available homes sank. By June, prices began rising. And builders broke ground on the most homes in four years. Housing boosted economic growth this year for the first time since 2005.

7. THE RETURN OF BIG OIL: Domestic crude oil production achieved its biggest one-year gain since 1951, driven by output in North Dakota and Texas. The United States is on pace to pass Saudi Arabia as the world's top oil producer within two years. Credit goes to drilling improvements, like those that have fed a boom in domestic natural-gas production—horizontal drilling combined with hydraulic fracturing,

or fracking. The new production helped cut natural gas prices to their lowest levels in more than a decade. Higher oil production helped reduce oil imports to 1992 levels and hand record profits to U.S. refiners. Gasoline prices declined in the last three months of the year. But for all of 2012, the average gallon was a record \$3.63.

8. BANKS BEHAVING BADLY: It was a banner year for bank drama. JPMorgan Chase lost \$6 billion in a complex series of trades. And one of its bankers in London grew famous for big bets and became known as the "London whale." Morgan Stanley was accused of botching Facebook's IPO. An ex-banker trashed Goldman Sachs for putting profits ahead of customers and for mocking clients as "muppets." Barclays

and UBS were fined for their roles in manipulating a key global interest rate. And HSBC agreed to pay \$1.9 billion to settle charges that it enabled money laundering by Mexican drug traffickers.

9. MOTHER NATURE: There wasn't enough rain in much of the nation. Then, suddenly there was much too much. The nation suffered its worst drought since the 1950s, covering 80 percent of U.S. farmland. Grain and food prices soared. Then a storm so destructive it was dubbed a "superstorm" wallop the Northeast. Sandy blasted coastal New Jersey and New York and put 8.5 million customers in 21 states in the dark. Sandy will likely end up as the second-costliest U.S. storm ever after Hurricane Katrina.

10. MOBILE-GADGET

Asia

PH president approves contraceptives law

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippine president has signed a law that will promote contraception, sexual education and family planning programs vigorously opposed by the country's Roman Catholic Church.

President Benigno Aquino III

signed the law on Dec. 21 and his administration announced it only Saturday because of the "sensitivity" of the issue, said deputy presidential spokeswoman Abigail Valte.

Valte said the passage of the law "closes a highly divisive chapter of our history" and

"opens the possibility of cooperation and reconciliation" among those who oppose and support the "Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012."

One of the most outspoken opponents of the legislation while it was still being debated in Congress, retired Archbishop Oscar Cruz, said Aquino is dividing the country while adopting a "first world country value system." He warned that the law will be followed by the passage of a divorce bill and same-sex

marriage, both strongly opposed by the Church.

Cruz, a former president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, criticized the secret signing of the law despite the presidential certification that it was an urgent measure.

"What is that? He is either ashamed of it or he is afraid of the repercussion of that bill," Cruz said.

"My first objection there is why don't you call a spade a spade? Why do you have to

call it 'reproductive health'? Come on. That is population-control legislation," he said. "From the onset there is already deception."

He said responsible parenthood as taught by the church entails using only natural family planning methods. Providing artificial contraceptives will "separate pleasure from the hardship" of bringing up a family.

"This government has now entered the bedroom bringing with it the condom and the pill.... That is very irresponsible," Cruz said.

He said a Catholic group is

planning to question the law at the Supreme Court.

Women's groups and other supporters of the law have praised Aquino for pushing its passage within the first half of his six-year term after the measure languished in Congress for 13 years largely because legislators were reluctant to pass it because of the strong opposition of the Catholic Church.

The Aquino administration "should be commended for its political will to see this law through," said Carlos Conde, Asia Researcher for the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch.

China requires Internet users to register names

BEIJING (AP)—China's government tightened Internet controls Friday with approval of a law that requires users to register their names after a flood of online complaints about official abuses rattled Communist Party leaders.

Authorities say the law will strengthen protections for personal information. But it also is likely to curtail the Internet's status as a forum to complain about the government or publicize corruption.

"Their intention is very clear: It is to take back that bit of space for public opinion, that freedom of speech hundreds of millions of Chinese Internet users have strived for," said Murong Xuecun, a prominent Chinese writer.

The rules approved by China's national legislature highlight the chronic tension between the ruling Communist Party's desire to reap technology's benefits and its insistence on controlling information.

Beijing encourages Web use for business and education but tries to block material deemed

subversive or obscene. It has steadily stepped up censorship, especially after social media played a role in protests that brought down governments in Egypt and Tunisia.

The latest measure requires users to provide their real names and other identifying information when they register with access providers or post information publicly.

"This is needed for the healthy development of the Internet," said Li Fei, deputy director of the legislature's Legal Work Committee, at a news conference.

Li rejected complaints that the public will be deprived of a forum that has been used to expose misconduct.

"The country's constitution protects citizens' rights in supervising and criticizing the state and government officials' behavior," Li said. The measure comes amid reports that Beijing might be disrupting use of software that allows Web surfers to see sites abroad that are blocked by its extensive filters.



A Filipino Catholic nun and an anti-Reproductive Health bill supporter look at pictures of Philippine legislators as they passed a landmark law that would provide government funding for contraceptives and sexuality classes during a session at the Philippine Congress in suburban Quezon City, north of Manila, Philippines on Monday Dec. 17, 2012.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation Office of Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS CUC-IFB-13-011

SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF MATERIALS FOR ISLAND WIDE WATERLINE REPAIRS, SAIPAN, CNMI

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), Office of the Executive Director, is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the supply and delivery of materials for island wide waterline repairs in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

The Bid Package and Scope-of-Work may be picked-up, upon receipt of a deposit from the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$ 100.00 for one set; at the CUC, Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 4, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Dandan, Saipan, between 7:30 AM to 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-13-011, supply and delivery of materials for island wide waterline repairs, Saipan, CNMI" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 4, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 08, 2013, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualifications should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on December 21, 2012 to Manny B. Sablan, Jr. CUC Purchasing Officer, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Yvonne Cabrera, Water/Wastewater Engineer via email yvonne.cabrera@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

ALAN W. FLETCHER
Acting Executive Director

NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RFP NMC13-001

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS SERVICES

Northern Marianas College is soliciting competitive sealed proposal from qualified firms as an "Independent Auditor" to perform a financial and compliance audit for the College.

Specifications and Scope of Work packages may be picked up at the NMC Procurement Office, Bldg. L, 2nd Floor, commencing Tuesday, December 04, 2012, between the hours of 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Proposal Packages are due no later than 10:00 a.m., January 4th, 2013, at Northern Marianas College, As Terlaje Campus, Procurement Office, Bldg. L, 2nd Floor, Saipan, MP 96950.

For Proposers located outside of the CNMI: you may request a copy of the RFP via fax (670) 235-7601 or email to Anita Camacho (anitac@nmcnet.edu).

Discussion may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discuss and revision of proposals, and such revision may be permitted after submission and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offers.

NMC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reasons and/or to waive any defects in any proposals if, in its sole discretion, to do so will be in the best interest of the College. All proposals shall become the property of NMC.

/s/ Anita Camacho
NMC Procurement Manager

/s/ David J. Attao
Dean of Administration

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Board of Parole
 P.O. Box 502641, Saipan, MP 96950-2641
 TEL. NOS.: (670) 664-3300 • 3302 FAX (670) 664-3310
 E-mail: govbp@pticom.com

BOARD OF PAROLE
Preliminary Hearing

Governor Benigno R. Fitial and LT. Governor Eloy S. Inos, through the CNMI Board of Parole, and pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section II of the "Open Government Act of 1992". Notice is hereby given that a Preliminary Hearing is scheduled for **January 08, 2013, (Tuesday) at 10:00 a.m., at the CNMI Board of Parole Office, Capitol Hill Road, Building Number 1216, Saipan.**

The following individual(s) will appear before the Hearing Examiner:

A. Parolee

1. DIAZ, David Tanaka Cr. Cs. No.: 01-0381E BOP No.: 10-005

If you have any question or information, please call the Parole Office at telephone number 664-3300 or 3302.

/s/ Rose Ada Hocog
Hearing Examiner

12/27/2012
Date

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
 CUC-IFB-13-011

SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF MATERIALS FOR ISLAND WIDE WATERLINE REPAIRS, SAIPAN, CNMI

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ALAN W. FLETCHER
Acting Executive Director

World

Russian FM says Assad won't go

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia's foreign minister said Saturday that Syrian President Bashar Assad has no intention of stepping down and it would be impossible to try to persuade him otherwise.

After a meeting with Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N.'s envoy for the Syrian crisis, Sergey Lavrov also said that the Syrian opposition risks sacrificing many more lives if it continues to insist on

Assad leaving office as a precondition for holding talks on Syria's future.

Assad "has repeatedly said publicly and privately, including in his meeting with Lakhdar Brahimi in Damascus not long ago, that he does not intend to leave for anywhere, that he will stay to the end in his post, that he will, as he expressed it, defend the Syrian people, Syrian sovereignty and so forth," Lav-

rov said. "There's no possibility to change this position."

Brahimi warned that the country's civil war could plunge the entire region into chaos by sending hundreds of thousands of refugees into neighboring nations, but his talks in Moscow produced no sign of progress toward settling the crisis.

Brahimi and Lavrov both said after their meeting that the 21-month-old Syrian con-

flict can only be settled through talks, while admitting that the parties in the conflict have shown no desire for compromise. Neither official hinted at a possible solution that would persuade the Syrian government and the opposition to agree to a ceasefire and sit down for talks about a political transition.

Brahimi, who arrived in Moscow on a one-day trip following his talks in Damascus

with Assad this week, voiced concern about the escalation of the conflict, which he said is becoming "more and more sectarian."

The envoy warned that "if you have a panic in Damascus and if you have 1 million people leaving Damascus in a panic, they can go to only two places—Lebanon and Jordan," and those countries may not be able to endure half a million refugees each.

Brahimi said that "if the only alternative is really hell or a political process, then we have got all of us to work ceaselessly for a political process."

Russia has been the main supporter of Assad's regime since the uprising began in March 2011, using its veto at the U.N. Security Council along with China to shield its last Mideast ally from international sanctions.

Lavrov said Russia would continue to oppose any U.N. resolution that would call for international sanctions against Assad and open the way for a foreign intervention in Syria. And while he again emphasized that Russia "isn't holding onto Bashar Assad," he added that Moscow continues to believe the opposition demand for his resignation as a precondition for peace talks is "counterproductive."

"The price for that precondition will be the loss of more Syrian lives," Lavrov said.

Both Brahimi and Lavrov insisted that efforts to end the civil war must be based on a peace plan that was approved at an international conference in Geneva in June.

The Geneva plan calls for an open-ended cease-fire, a transitional government to run the country until elections, and the drafting of a new constitution. But it was a non-starter with the opposition because of Russia's insistence that the plan leave the door open for Assad being part of the transition process and the fact that it didn't mention possible U.N. sanctions.



Protesters chant slogans and wave Syrian revolution flags during a rally after the Friday prayer at Al-Azhar mosque in Cairo, Egypt, Friday, Dec. 28, 2012.

Egypt's president warns against dangers to economy

CAIRO (AP)—Egypt's Islamist president used his first address before the newly convened upper house of parliament on Saturday to warn against any unrest that could harm the country's battered economy, as he renewed calls for the opposition to join in a national dialogue.

In the nationally televised speech, Mohammed Morsi said the nation's entire efforts should be focused on "production, work, seriousness and effort" now that a new constitution came into effect this week. He blamed protests and violence the past month for causing further damage to an economy already deteriorating from the turmoil since the fall of autocrat Hosni Mubarak early last year.

In an alarm bell over the economy, the central bank announced soon after Morsi's speech that foreign currency reserves—which have been bleeding away for nearly two years—are at a "critical" level, the minimum needed to cover foreign debt payments and buy

strategic imports.

Morsi's strongly worded address to lawmakers appeared aimed at sending a message to the mainly liberal and secular opposition not to engage in any new protests, depicting unrest as a threat to the priority of rebuilding.

All sides must "realize the needs of the moment" and work only through "mature democracy while avoiding violence," Morsi told the 270-member upper house, or Shura Council. "We condemn and reject all forms of violence by individuals, groups, institutions and even from the nation and its government. This is completely rejected."

He appeared to chide the opposition for not working with him.

"We all know the interests of the nation," he said. "Would any of us be happy if the nation goes bankrupt? I don't doubt anyone's intentions. But can anyone here be happy if the nation is exposed to economic weakness?"

The mainly liberal and secular opposition accuses Morsi of concentrating all power on the Muslim Brotherhood, from which he hails, and other Islamists and steamrolling any alternative voices.

The main opposition groups have refused to join a national

dialogue convened by Morsi, saying past talks have brought no compromise. They also stayed out of the president's appointments last week of a few opposition figures to the overwhelmingly Islamist Shura Council, calling the move tokenism.

WORLD BRIEFS

4 dead in Moscow airliner crash

MOSCOW (AP)—A passenger airliner careered off the runway at Russia's third-busiest airport and partly onto a highway while landing on Saturday, broke into pieces and caught fire, killing at least four people. Officials said there were eight people aboard the Tu-204 belonging to Russian airline Red Wings that was flying back from the Czech Republic without passengers to its home at Vnukovo Airport. Emergency officials said in a televised news conference that four people were killed and

another four severely injured when the plane rolled off the runway into a snowy field and partly onto an adjacent highway, then disintegrated. No collisions with vehicles on the major, multilane highway were reported.

South Africa: Mandela convalesces at home

JOHANNESBURG (AP)—South Africa's presidency says it has no updates on the condition of former leader Nelson Mandela, who is convalescing at home after a hospital stay and is reported to be doing better. The South African Press

Association quotes presidential spokesman Mac Maharaj as saying Saturday that he has no new information on 94-year-old Mandela, who was released from a hospital on Wednesday. The former president, who spent 27 years in prison under apartheid, was admitted Dec. 8 and received treatment for a lung infection. He also had a procedure to remove gallstones. Maharaj previously said doctors have noted progress in Mandela's condition but will continue to treat him at his home in the Johannesburg neighborhood of Houghton.

At Christmas Eve Mass, pope urges space for God

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Pope Benedict XVI marked Christmas Eve with Mass in St. Peter's Basilica and a pressing question: Will people find room in their hectic, technology-driven lives for children, the poor and God?

The pontiff also prayed that Israelis and Palestinians live in peace and freedom, and asked the faithful to pray for strife-torn Syria as well as Lebanon and Iraq.

The ceremony began at 10 p.m. local time Monday with the blare of trumpets, meant to symbolize Christian joy over the news of Christ's birth in Bethlehem. As midnight neared, church bells tolled throughout Rome, while inside the basilica, the sweet voices of the Vatican's boys' choir resounded joyously.

Christmas Eve Mass at the Vatican traditionally began at midnight, but the start time was moved up years ago so as to give the 85-year-old pontiff more time to rest before his Christmas Day speech. That address is to be delivered at midday Tuesday from the basilica's central balcony.

A smiling Benedict, dressed in gold-colored vestments, waved to photo-snapping pilgrims and applauding churchgoers as he glided up the center aisle toward the ornate main altar of the cavernous basilica on a wheeled platform guided by white-gloved aides. The platform saves him energy.

In his homily, Benedict cited the Gospel account of Mary and Joseph finding no room at an inn and ending up in a stable which sheltered the baby Jesus. He urged people to reflect upon what they find time for in their busy, technology-driven lives.

"The great moral question of our attitude toward the homeless, toward refugees and migrants takes on a deeper dimension: Do we really have room for God when he seeks to enter under our roof? Do we have time and space for him?" the pope said.

"The faster we can move, the more efficient our time-saving appliances become, the less time we have. And God? The question of God never seems urgent," Benedict lamented.

The pope worried that "we are so 'full' of ourselves that there is no room left for God." He added, "that means there is no room for others either—for children, for the poor, for the stranger."

With his voice a bit hoarse, and looking somewhat tired as the two-hour ceremony neared its end, Benedict decried that history has suffered through "misuse of religion," when belief in one God became a pretext for intolerance and violence.

Focus

Over the fiscal cliff: Soft or hard landing?

WASHINGTON (AP)—Efforts to save the nation from going over a year-end “fiscal cliff” were still in disarray as lawmakers returned to the Capitol to confront the tax-and-spend crisis. A tone-setting quotation was Democratic Sen. Harry Reid’s assertion that the House under Republican Speaker John Boehner had been “operating with a dictatorship.”

President Barack Obama flew back to Washington from Hawaii after telephoning congressional leaders from his Christmas vacation perch. Once back, he set up a meeting with leaders of both parties at the White House late Friday to make a fresh attempt to find a solution before Monday night’s deadline.

A look at why it’s so hard for Republicans and Democrats to compromise on urgent matters of taxes and spending, and what happens if they fail to meet their deadline:

NEW YEAR’S HEADACHE

Partly by fate, partly by design, some scary fiscal forces come together at the start of 2013 unless Congress and Obama act to stop them. They include:

■ Some \$536 billion in tax increases, touching nearly all Americans, because various federal tax cuts and breaks expire at year’s end.

■ About \$110 billion in spending cuts divided equally between the military and most other federal departments. That’s about 8 percent of their annual budgets, 9 percent for the Pentagon.

Hitting the national economy with that double whammy of tax increases and spending cuts is what’s called going over the “fiscal cliff.” If allowed to unfold over 2013, it would lead to recession, a big jump in unemployment and financial market turmoil, economists predict.

WHAT IF THEY MISS THE DEADLINE?

If New Year’s Day arrives without a deal, the nation shouldn’t plunge onto the shoals of recession immediately. There still might be time to engineer a soft landing.

So long as lawmakers and the president appear to be working toward agreement, the tax hikes and spending cuts could mostly be held at bay for a few weeks. Then they could be repealed retroactively once a deal was reached.

THE SPENDING

If the nation goes over the fiscal cliff, budget cuts of 8 percent or

ington appeared unable to reach accord? Would worried consumers and businesses sharply reduce their spending? In what could be a preview, stock prices in the U.S. and Europe dropped Friday on waning hopes that Obama and key lawmakers would reach an 11th-hour compromise.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has warned lawmakers that the economy is already suffering from the uncertainty and they shouldn’t risk making it worse by blowing past their deadline.

WHAT IF THEY NEVER AGREE?

If negotiations between Obama and Congress collapse completely, 2013 looks like a rocky year. Taxes would jump \$2,400 on average for families with incomes of \$50,000 to \$75,000, according to a study by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center. Because consumers would get less of their paychecks to spend, businesses and jobs would suffer.

At the same time, Americans would feel cuts in government services; some federal workers would be furloughed or laid off and companies would lose government business. The nation would lose up to 3.4 million jobs, the Congressional Budget Office predicts.

“The consequences of that would be felt by everybody,” Bernanke says.

THE TAXES

Much of the disagreement surrounds the George W. Bush-era income tax cuts, and whether those rates should be allowed to rise for the nation’s wealthiest taxpayers. Both political parties say they want to protect the middle class from tax increases.

Several tax breaks begun in 2009 to stimulate the economy by aiding low- and middle-income families are also set to expire Jan. 1. The alternative minimum tax would expand to catch 28 million more taxpayers, with an average increase of \$3,700 a year. Taxes on investments would rise, too. More deaths would be covered by the federal estate tax, and the rate climbs from 35 percent to 55 percent. Some corporate tax breaks would end.

The temporary Social Security payroll tax cut also is due to expire. That tax break for most Americans seems likely to end even if a fiscal cliff deal is reached, now that Obama has backed down from his call to prolong it as an economic stimulus.

THE SPENDING

If the nation goes over the fiscal cliff, budget cuts of 8 percent or

9 percent would hit most of the federal government, touching all sorts of things from agriculture to law enforcement and the military to weather forecasting. A few areas, such as Social Security benefits, Veterans Affairs and some programs for the poor, are exempt.

THERE’S MORE AT STAKE

All sorts of stuff could get wrapped up in the fiscal cliff deal-making. A sampling:

■ Some 2 million jobless Americans may lose their federal unemployment aid. Obama wants to continue the benefits extension as part of the deal; Republicans say it’s too costly.

■ Social Security recipients might see their checks grow more slowly. As part of a possible deal, Obama and Republican leaders want to change the way cost-of-living adjustments are calculated, which would mean smaller checks over the years for retirees who get Social Security, veterans’ benefits or government pensions.

■ The price of milk could double. If Congress doesn’t provide a fix for expiring dairy price supports before Jan. 1, milk-drinking families could feel the pinch. One scenario is to attach a farm bill extension to the fiscal cliff legislation—if a compromise is reached in time.

■ Millions of taxpayers who want to file their 2012 returns before mid-March will be held up while they wait to see if Congress comes through with a deal to stop the alternative minimum

tax from hitting more people.

CALL THE WHOLE THING OFF?

In theory, Congress and Obama could just say no to the fiscal cliff, by extending all the tax cuts and overturning the automatic spending reductions in current law. But both Republicans and Democrats agree it’s time to take steps to put the nation on a path away from a future of crippling debt.

Indeed, the automatic spending cuts set for January were created as a last-ditch effort to force Congress to deal with the debt problem.

If Washington bypassed the fiscal cliff, the next crisis would be just around the corner, in late February or early March, when the government reaches a \$16.4 trillion ceiling on the amount of money it can borrow.

Boehner says Republicans won’t go along with raising the limit on government borrowing unless the increase is matched by spending cuts to help attack the long-term debt problem. Failing to raise the debt ceiling could lead to a first-ever U.S. default that would roil the financial markets and shake worldwide confidence in the United States.

To avoid that scenario, Obama and Boehner are trying to wrap a debt limit agreement into the fiscal cliff negotiations.

SO WHAT’S THE HOLDUP?

They’re at loggerheads over

some big questions.

Obama says any deal must include higher taxes for the wealthiest Americans. Many House Republicans oppose raising anyone’s tax rates. Boehner tried to get the House to vote for higher taxes only on incomes above \$1 million but dropped the effort when it became clear he didn’t have the votes.

Republicans also insist on deeper spending cuts than Democrats want to make. And they want to bring the nation’s long-term debt under control by significantly curtailing the growth of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security—changes that many Democrats oppose.

Obama, meanwhile, wants more temporary economic “stimulus” spending to help speed up a sluggish recovery. Republicans say the nation can’t afford it.

IT’S NOT JUST WASHINGTON

Seems like they could just make nice, shake hands and split their differences, right?

But there’s a reason neither side wants to give ground. The two parties represent a divided and inconsistent America. True, Obama just won reelection. But voters also chose a Republican majority in the House.

Republicans and Democrats alike say they are doing what the voters back home want.

Neither side has a clear advantage in public opinion. In an Associated Press-GfK poll, 43 percent said they trust the

Democrats more to manage the federal budget deficit and 40 percent preferred the Republicans. There’s a similar split on who’s more trusted with taxes.

About half of Americans support higher taxes for the wealthy, the poll says, and about 10 percent want tax increases all around. Still, almost half say cutting government services, not raising taxes, should be the main focus of lawmakers as they try to balance the budget.

When asked about specific budget cuts being discussed in Washington, few Americans express support for them.

THE COUNTDOWN

Time for deal-making is short, thanks to the holiday and congressional calendars. Some key dates for averting the fiscal cliff:

■ Lawmakers didn’t begin returning to the Capitol until Thursday, leaving less than a week to vote on a compromise before year’s end.

■ Obama returned Thursday from his Christmas vacation in Hawaii. The president asked congressional leaders to the White House Friday to try to resolve the fiscal cliff.

■ If lawmakers reach Dec. 31 without a deal, some economists worry that the financial markets might swoon.

■ The current Congress is in session only through noon Eastern time on Jan. 3. After that, a newly elected Congress with 13 new senators and 82 new House members would inherit the problem.



EVENTS MANAGER

Our Resort is seeking a motivated and experienced Events Manager who will build and strengthen guest relationships while driving event sales and overseeing all event bookings, event staff, and event operations.

We are looking for an individual who is highly creative, articulate, outgoing, and with the ability to provide excellent customer service and staff management in a fun, fast-paced and exciting environment. The candidate must be flexible, friendly, and hardworking and also enjoy interacting with both children and adults. His/her past experience should demonstrate success in sales, creativity, drive and initiative.

As the Events Manager, the responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Working with the Resort Management Team to create, host and promote special events
- Overseeing all event bookings and ensuring superior service to our guests
- Driving community relationships and event sales
- Performing the functions of event team members when necessary

Qualifications:

- Minimum Education: Associate’s Degree preferably in Sales, Marketing or Tourism
- Minimum Experience: Two years of experience in a related field
- Ability to develop and market new event ideas
- Ability to work nights, weekends, and holidays
- Organizational, follow-up, and multitasking skills are a must

Interested applicants may send their applications to hr_frs@fiestasaipan.com. Application Forms may be obtained at our Security Office located at the South Wing. To be considered, applications must be submitted not later than January 30, 2013. Background checks and pre-employment drug testing will be required prior to employment.

GUEST RELATIONS MANAGER (China Market)

Our Resort is looking for a Chinese-speaking (Mandarin) candidate with strong interpersonal, communication and presentation skills who will help ensure the daily smooth running of the hotel by taking care of its guests and being a point of contact for, both Chinese guests and staff.

As the Guest Relations Manager, the responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Working with the management team to provide focused attention on Chinese guests
- Promoting and developing loyalty from Chinese hotel guests by reacting positively to their individual needs and providing a high level of personalized guest service
- Direct any necessary changes to ensure seamless guest service
- Dealing with guest relation issues

Qualifications:

- Minimum Education: Associate’s Degree preferably in Sales, Marketing or Tourism
- Minimum Experience: Two years of experience in a related field/similar role or in a high volume hospitality environment at supervisory level or as a Front Office Supervisor
- Advance or native Chinese Mandarin language speaker and writer
- Ability to work flexible hours including nights, weekends, and holidays
- Excellent communication, organizational, and multitasking skills are a must
- Team player

Health & Fitness

Program helps veterans reintegrate through music

By SAMANTHA HENRY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTCLAIR, N.J. (AP)—During stressful times as a combat medic in Afghanistan, Mason Sullivan found solace in Vivaldi. New Jersey native Nairobi Cruz was comforted by country music, a genre she had never heard before joining the Army. For Jose Mercedes, it was an eclectic iPod mix that helped him cope with losing an arm during a tour of duty in Iraq.

These three young veterans all say music played a crucial role in alleviating the stresses of active duty. Now, all three are enrolled in a program that hopes to use music to ease their reintegration into civilian life.

"It's a therapy session without the 'sit down, lay down, and write notes,'" Mercedes, 26, of Union City, said of the music program. "It's different - it's an alternative that's way better."

The pilot program, called Voices of Valor, has veterans work as a group to synthesize their experiences into musical lyrics. Guided by musicians and a psychology mentor, they write and record a song, and



In this Oct. 10, 2012, photo, musician Julio Fernandez holds a guitar during a class session at Montclair State University in Montclair, N.J. Students are participating in a music class for service men and women that helps them cope with their life after the military through a program called Voices of Valor.

then hold a CD release party. The program is currently under way at Montclair State University, where students participate through the school's veteran affairs program.

Developed by husband and wife team Rena Fruchter and Brian Dallow, it is open to veterans of any age and background. No musical experience is required.

Both accomplished musi-

cians, Fruchter and Dallow created the program as part of Music for All Seasons, an organization they founded which runs musical programs for audiences at places ranging from nursing homes to prisons.

Based on their experiences working with children at shelters for victims of domestic violence, Fruchter and Dallow realized that young people too traumatized to talk about what

they had been through were nevertheless willing to bang on an instrument or sing—often leading to communication breakthroughs. They felt the same might be true for veterans, or other populations traditionally averse to more overt forms of 'talk therapy.'

"We've had situations in which veterans have been carrying their burdens deep inside for such a long time, and they come into this group and they begin to talk about things that they've never talked about before," Fruchter said. "They really open up, and it translates into some

music that is really amazing and incredible and powerful."

During a recent session of the eight-week program in Montclair, music facilitators Jennifer Lampert, a former Miss USO, and Julio Fernandez, a musician and member of the band Spyro Gyra, lead a small group of young veterans in brainstorming about their experiences.

"Tired of being angry," "Easier not to move on," "The war at home," were phrases Lampert extracted from a discussion among the participants and she wrote each phrase in marker on large notepads fastened to a

classroom blackboard. As they spoke, Fernandez strummed an acoustic guitar while Lampert sang some of the phrases the students had come up with, adjusting the beat and tempo at their suggestion. Suddenly, a musical lyric emerged: "Sometimes, I wish the past is where I stayed."

A few weeks later, the group gathered at a sound studio in Union City, where they donned headphones and clearly relished the opportunity to record their collectively written tune, "Freedom," in a professional studio.

Kenya hospital imprisons new mothers with no money

By JASON STRAZIUSO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

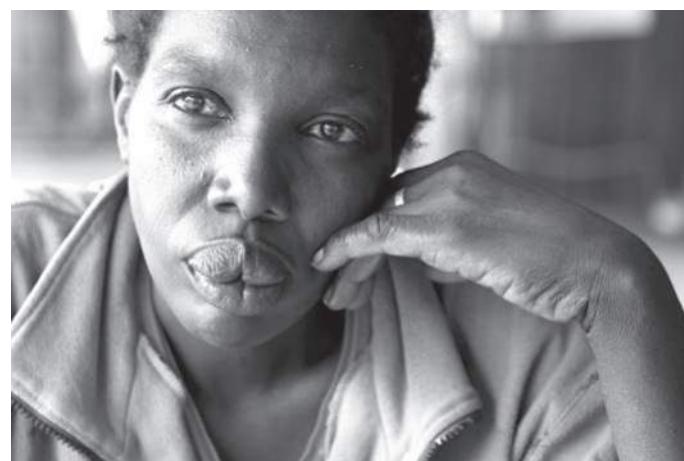
NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—The director of the Pumwani Maternity Hospital, located in a hardscrabble neighborhood of downtown Nairobi, freely acknowledges what he's accused of: detaining mothers who can't pay their bills. Lazarus Omondi says it's the only way he can keep his medical center running.

Two mothers who live in a mud-wall and tin-roof slum a short walk from the maternity hospital, which is affiliated with the Nairobi City Council, told The Associated Press that Pumwani wouldn't let them leave after delivering their babies. The bills the mothers couldn't afford were \$60 and \$160. Guards would beat mothers with sticks who tried to leave without paying, one of the women said.

Now, a New York-based group has filed a lawsuit on the women's behalf in hopes of forcing Pumwani to stop the practice, a practice Omondi is candid about.

"We hold you and squeeze you until we get what we can get. We must be self-sufficient," Omondi said in an interview in his hospital office. "The hospital must get money to pay electricity, to pay water. We must pay our doctors and our workers."

"They stay there until they pay. They must pay," he said of the 350 mothers who give birth each week on average. "If you don't pay the hospital will collapse."



In this photo taken Friday, Dec. 14, 2012, Maimouna Awuor, 44, speaks to The Associated Press in Nairobi, Kenya. Awuor and another mother told The Associated Press that the Pumwani Maternity Hospital wouldn't let them leave after delivering their babies.

The Center for Reproductive Rights, which filed the suit this month in the High Court of Kenya, says detaining women for not paying is illegal. Pumwani is associated with the Nairobi City Council, one reason it might be able to get away with such practices, and the patients are among Nairobi's poorest with hardly anyone to stand up for them.

She said saw some women tried to flee but they were beaten by the guards and turned back. While her husband worked at a faraway refugee camp, Awuor's 9-year-old daughter took care of her siblings. A friend helped feed them, she said, while the children stayed in the family's 50-square-foot shack, where rent is \$18 a month. She says she was released after 20 days after Nairobi's mayor paid her bill.

Politicians in Kenya in general are expected to give out money and get a budget to do so.

Personal Trainer

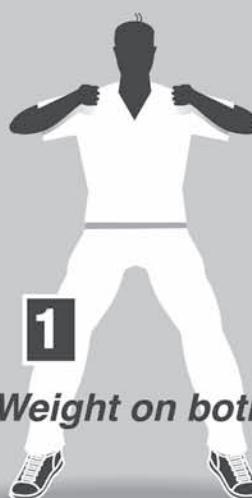
Low-speed, low-impact exercise

The traditional Chinese discipline of tai chi chuan appeals to people of all ages because it gives beneficial exercise with little or no risk.

Pronounced TIE-JEE-CHOON

- Combines deep breathing, relaxation and gentle, controlled movement
- Looks like slow, graceful dance

1 Weight on both feet



Recommended schedule

Three or more 20- to 30-minute sessions a week; inactive people should start slowly

2

Weight on right foot



Four steps in 'Brush the knee,' a typical tai chi movement

Shift weight from one foot to the other while moving arms, body and legs

Left palm brushes left knee as it passes

Begin with classes

at a health club, martial arts school, hospital or community center; after learning movements, practice tai chi alone or with a group

3

Weight on left foot



4

Weight on right foot

Intensity can vary Depends on how deeply and slowly movements are done and how long arms or legs are lifted

NOTE: Martial art schools usually emphasize using tai chi for health, but some teach a combat-oriented version

Source: The Physician and Sportsmedicine
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Paul Trap © 2012 MCT

Life & Style

AP critics pick the year's best movies

The top 10 films of 2012, according to AP Movie Critic Christy Lemire:

1 "Argo"—Directing just his third feature, Ben Affleck has come up with a seamless blend of detailed international drama and breathtaking suspense, with just the right amount of dry humor to provide context and levity. He shows a deft handling of tone, especially in making difficult transitions between scenes in Tehran, Washington and Hollywood, but also gives one of his strongest performances yet in front of the camera. The story of a rescue during the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis sounds like eat-your-vegetables cinema, and mixing it with an inside-Hollywood comedy sounds impossible, but Affleck and screenwriter Chris Terrio pull it all off.

2 "Beasts of the Southern Wild"—This is sheer poetry on screen: an explosion of joy in the midst of startling squalor and one of the most visceral, original films to come along in a while. The story of a little girl named Hush-puppy (Quvenzhane Wallis) living with her daddy on a remote, primal strip of eroding land in the southernmost reaches of the Louisiana bayou is so ambitious and so accomplished, it's amazing that it's only director Benh Zeitlin's first feature. His film is at once dreamlike and brutal, ethereal yet powerfully emotional.

3 "Skyfall"—One of the best James Bond films ever starring the best Bond yet in Daniel Craig. It's also the most gorgeous installment in the 23-film franchise, with Sam Mendes directing and Roger Deakins as cinematographer. It's full of the requisite thrills but also complicated and meaty, featuring an agent who isn't always slick and doesn't always have the answers in hunting an elusive cyberterrorist (a fantastic Javier Bardem).

4 "Holy Motors"—This movie is just straight-up nuts, in all the best ways. Writer-director Leos Carax's journey provides a joyous, surprising and darkly funny exploration of all the best cinema has to offer. Yes, this is a capital-A art film, one that challenges the viewer and leaves a lot of room for interpretation, but that's part of the adventure. Denis Lavant gives a tour-de-force performance, assuming nine different roles as a mysterious man who travels around Paris in the back of a limousine all day, carrying out various assignments. Hop in and buckle up.

5 "Zero Dark Thirty"—A huge achievement from both technical and storytelling perspectives. Following

the Oscar success of "The Hurt Locker," director Kathryn Bigelow reteams with writer Mark Boal to tell an even larger and more complicated story: the decade-long hunt for Osama bin Laden. The attention to detail, to getting it right each step of the way, is evident in every element. And Jessica Chastain is relentless and self-possessed in a rare leading role as a young CIA officer on the case.

6 "The Master"—Paul Thomas Anderson, long a master himself of technique and tone, has created a startling, stunningly gorgeous film shot in lushly vibrant 70mm, with impeccable production design and powerful performances from stars Joaquin Phoenix, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Amy Adams. But this story of a wayward man and the charismatic cult leader who guides him—which may or may not have been inspired by Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard—is also his most ambitious film yet.

7 "The Imposter"—A gripping documentary about a missing boy filled with the kind of twists, turns and dramatic character revelations of a page-turner mystery. Director Bart Layton takes a story that was already fascinatingly weird to begin with and makes it even more compelling by structuring it as a shadowy film noir, offering information in expertly paced, precisely measured amounts to maximize suspense.

8 "Moonrise Kingdom"—If you love Wes Anderson, you'll love this: The best of what he can do is vibrantly on display. The screenplay, which he co-wrote with Roman Coppola, has resulted in his sweetest and most sincere live-action movie since the one that remains his best, 1998's "Rushmore." The contradiction inherent to all of Anderson's films—the juxtaposition of the meticulous artificiality of the settings and the passionately wistful emotions that are longing to burst free—is at its most effective in a while in this tale of first love.

9 "Oslo, August 31st"—A film of quietly intense precision and vividly honest humanity. Anders Danielsen Lie gives one of the great, underappreciated performances of the year as a heroin addict who's allowed to leave rehab for the day to head into the Norwegian capital for a job interview. Instead, he wanders around visiting old haunts, reconnecting awkwardly with friends and facing his demons. It's a performance of both subtlety and darkness, as director Joachim Trier leads him down an unpredictable and poignant path.

10 "This Is Not a Film"—Veteran Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi's homemade documentary is simultaneously depressing as hell and brimming with hope and defiance. With its stripped-down aesthetic, it finds beauty in the mundane and even boring details of daily life. And it's an inspiring must-see for

See MOVIES on Next Page

This image released by Warner Bros shows John Goodman, left, Alan Arkin, center, and actor-director Ben Affleck in a scene from "Argo."

AP



In Celebration of His New Life

†Francisco Borja Palacios
Lovingly known as "Tik"

Was born to Life on October 16, 1939 and called to his Eternal rest on December 26, 2012 at the age of 73.

In his new life, he now joins his:

Father: †Antonio Santos Palacios (Laduk, Maka)

Mother: †Magdalena Arriola Borja Palacios (Tuhu, Te'e)

Father/Mother In Law: †Jose C./+Ana B. Manibusan

First Wife: †Concepcion "Conchita" Mafnas Palacios

Son: †Anthony Manibusan Palacios

Sisters: †Catalina Palacios, †Remedio Palacios

Brothers & Sisters In Law: †Inocencia I. Palacios, †Carmelita M. Palacios, †James L. Hemley, †Nicolasa M./†Vicente Cepeda, †Heronimo P./†Candilaria Manibusan, †Rufina M./†Pedro Tudela †Sylvia M./†Antonio Cabrera †Vicente P./†Maria Manibusan, †Josepha M./†Santiago Camacho, †Rita M./†Juan Santos, †Victoria M./†Gregorio Sablan, †Abraham T./†Bernadita Manibusan, Luis Manibusan

His loving memories will forever live in the hearts of his:

Wife: Veronica Inocencia "Cheng" Benavente Manibusan Palacios

Children/Spouses/Grand Children/Great Grand Children:

Joseph/Bertha Palacios (Anthony & Naoko (Ryona), Joel, Jonathan, Angel (Alanna Jade), Conchita & Juan Camacho (Ioane), Joseph Jr., Jude Noel) Ignacio "Doug" Palacios and children

Velma/Paul Camacho (RyAnne Veronica, Puti'on Primitiva, Paul William II) Frank Jr./Melissa Palacios (Kody Dione, Reared Children: Naomi Ann, Koryn Charmaine)

Brothers & Sisters/In Laws: Adolpho/Odesiah Palacios, Patricia/Martin Debeer, Edward Palacios, Lucia Palacios, Ignacio/Dianne Palacios, Rebecca/Joaquin Cruz, Ruth P. Damian, Faustina Palacios, Jose Palacios, Casiano B./Elsie Matsunaga, Francisco B./Nelda Manibusan, Maria M./Moses Sibetang, Dolores B. Manibusan, Lydia M./Paul Manglona, Violeta D. Manibusan

Reared God Children: Cherry Lou M. Rojo, Daisy Ann M. Rojo, Kevin M. Rojo

He will also be missed by numerous Aunties, Uncles, Cousins, Nieces, Nephews, God Children and Friends

Daily mass is being offered at 6:00 am and the Holy Rosary at 7:00 pm at San Jose Church. On Monday, December 31, 2012, mass is at 6:00 am, immediately followed by the Holy Rosary. On Thursday, January 3rd, 2012, our dearly beloved will be escorted from the Borja Funeral Home to San Jose Church at 7:00 am. Responso, Holy Rosary and public viewing will follow. Mass of Christian Burial will be at 11:00 am, followed by the Internment Service at the Chalan Kanoa Cemetery where he will be laid to rest.

Thank You, Si Yu'us Ma'ase' and God Bless
Ginen as Veronica "Cheng" Benavente Manibusan Palacios, Children and Family

Beyoncé, Chili Peppers, among NYE lineup in Vegas

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Sin City has another New Year's Eve planned with celebrity-studded bashes, exclusive concerts and a rooftop fireworks display billed as the nation's largest.

Big-name celebrity acts including The Black Keys, The Killers and Pitbull will help hundreds of thousands of partiers ring in the new year Monday under the watchful eyes of a legion of law enforcement officers concerned with keeping the celebration peaceful and eager casino bosses concerned with ending 2012 with a profitable bang.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers are performing a sold-out show at the Cosmopolitan's Chelsea Ballroom that will be broadcast live on the casino's 65-foot (19-meter) marquee to partiers on the Strip below. Beyoncé will give an invitation-only performance in the Wynn's 1,500-seat-amphitheater.

Other casino are touting

pricey nightclub bashes with \$3,000 bottle service and open bars, hosted by reality TV and music celebrities including Kim Kardashian, Nicki Minaj and Brandy.

Revelers can also party celebrity-free on the Brooklyn Bridge at the New York-New York Hotel, where tickets start at \$170, or inside the replica Eiffel Tower at Paris Las Vegas, where couples packages start at \$300.

Those unimpressed with the ersatz offerings on the Strip can head 15 minutes south to a Great Gatsby soirée set inside a private airplane hangar. Organizers say the aviation-themed bash will recall a time "when the parties were bigger, the morals were looser and the liquor was cheaper."

Las Vegas' New Year's eve festivities, dubbed "America's Party," have doubled in size since 1990. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitor's Authority expects 332,000 visitors Mon-



AP
In this July 1, 2011 file photo, Beyoncé performs on ABC's "Good Morning America" in New York.

day, equal to the record-breaking number that flocked to last year's celebration.

That number has hoteliers happy, but does not rival other New Year's Eve celebrations. The ball drop at New York City's Times Square draws more than 1 million spectators, and some 2 million people flock to the shores of Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro for music and fireworks.

Still, Las Vegas is dealing a full house this weekend, with hotel occupancy approaching 100 percent, according to Dawn Christensen of the visitor's authority, and rooms going for several times the normal price.

The city room suite at the Cosmopolitan can be had for \$210 on Tuesday, but costs

\$650 Monday. The deluxe king room at Caesars Palace is going for \$519 on Monday, compared with \$139 Tuesday.

With gambling revenue still down 20 percent in the Las Vegas area and visitor levels only recently returning to pre-recession levels this year, New Year's Eve is a crucial night for the casino industry. It's the biggest money-maker of the year, projected to bring in \$210 million on Monday alone, not counting gambling revenue.

Spectators will be treated to more than eight minutes of coordinated pyrotechnics costing \$500,000. The fireworks will be shot from the rooftops of seven hotel-casinos, from the MGM Grand toward the south end of the Strip to the Stratosphere in the north.

The show will feature a medley of bubblegum pop, including The Wanted's "Glad You Came" and Pink's "Raise Your Glass."

MOVIES

From Page 19

anyone who feels the urgent need to create something beautiful and meaningful, regardless of the cost. Panahi shot it over the course of a day in his Tehran apartment while under house arrest and had it smuggled out in a cake. The most modest film on the list but also the most important.

■■■

The top 10 films of 2012, according to AP Movie Writer David Germain:

1 "Moonrise Kingdom"—First love is never this crazy and fanciful, but it sure felt like it way back when. Wes Anderson presents a wondrous romance about two 12-year-old runaways seeking refuge from life's cruelties and disappointments. Newcomers Jared Gilman and Kara Hayward beguile us with performances precociously passionate yet disarmingly innocent, complemented by a group of sweet adult sad-sacks—among them Bill Murray, Frances McDormand, Bruce Willis and Edward Norton—who find respite from disillusionment themselves with a glimpse through the kids' pure eyes.

2 "Life of Pi"—A film about a youth alone on a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger has no business working. But Ang Lee adapts Yann Martel's introspective novel with inspired narrative wiles and glorious visuals presented in 3-D that lovingly enfolds and enlarges the action. Newcomer Suraj Sharma is a marvel as the teen cast adrift. And the film richly explores our cathartic need to tell tales, its dual ending asking a lady-or-the-tiger question: Which story do you prefer, the one of genuine horror or the one of hopeful, improbable pos-

sibility?

3 "Zero Dark Thirty"—Kathryn Bigelow follows her Academy Award triumph on "The Hurt Locker" with a docudrama of even greater ambition and scope. Collaborating again with screenwriter Mark Boal, Bigelow crafts a studiously detailed, relentlessly paced chronicle about the hunt for Osama bin Laden. Jessica Chastain is ferocious as a CIA analyst tracking bin Laden with almost blind obsession. The film's third act—the Navy SEALs assault that killed bin Laden—is as tense and absorbing as big-screen action gets.

4 "Argo"—Ben Affleck surges forward as both actor and director with this true-life story of a CIA operative who concocted an incredible ruse to free six Americans from Iran disguised as a movie crew after the 1979 embassy takeover. The film has it all—smarts, suspense, dark laughs, exacting attention to period style. This arguably is Affleck's best on-screen performance, and he's backed with tremendous heart and humor by John Goodman and Alan Arkin as Hollywood insiders helping to pull off the con.

5 "Searching for Sugar Man"—Imagine the bitterness of the true artist who fades back to obscurity after being on the verge of stardom. Now imagine a soul so noble that bitterness never enters the picture. That's a guy who truly deserves another chance. Singer-songwriter Rodriguez gets just that as Malik Bendjelloul's inspiring documentary recounts apocryphal rumors about his fate—then reveals what really happened after his brush with success in the 1970s. To paraphrase Joey the Lips in "The Commitments," success for Rodriguez would have been predictable. The way it turned

out is poetry.

6 "Rust and Bone"—Jacques Audiard delivers one of the oddest of screen couples in this deeply involving and completely unpredictable romantic drama about a whale trainer (Marion Cotillard) who loses her legs in an orca accident and a negligent single dad (Matthias Schoenaerts) training as a mixed martial-arts fighter. Only in a movie would these two fall in love—more likely in a bad movie. But Audiard and his devoted stars find so many moments of grace and pathos that the relationship grows from tenuous to genuine with complete conviction.

7 "The Master"—Good thing Joaquin Phoenix's retirement turned out to be a hoax. He does his best work ever in his return to the screen as a volatile World War II vet who becomes both disciple and antagonist to an L. Ron Hubbard-style cult leader (Philip Seymour Hoffman, in a performance rivaling his own career high in "Capote"). Following the battle-of-wills drama of "There Will Be Blood," Paul Thomas Anderson is proving himself a master of duality, crafting another grand work of egos and outlooks in deadly conflict.

8 "Lincoln"—Few performances qualify as monumental. That's the best word to characterize Daniel Day-Lewis as Abraham Lincoln, though. He vanishes into the president's awkward, folksy, melancholy spirit, creating an unforgettable portrait of greatness that pretty much puts to rest any thought of another actor trying his hand at a serious portrayal of Lincoln for a good long while. Steven Spielberg eschews the battlefield for a talky yet affecting look at Lincoln's final months. America couldn't have done without Lincoln, and Spielberg couldn't have done

without Day-Lewis.

9 "West of Memphis"—This is a vote not only for a film, but for artists who joined in protest to save three men from prison—one from Death Row—after they were convicted in the 1993 slayings of three Cub Scouts. Inspired by "Paradise Lost," an earlier documentary about the case, Peter Jackson and wife Fran Walsh bankrolled their own investigation and produced this new film by Amy Berg that calls into question the case built by prosecutors. The story's enthralling, the climax triumphant.

10 "Looper"—For someone who thinks Bruce Willis' "Twelve Monkeys" is the defining time-travel flick, it's irresistible to see him in another clever, careening tale of time-hopping. Joseph Gordon-Levitt wonderfully channels the younger Willis as a hit man whose latest assignment is to snuff his older self, in a perverse retirement system where the mob of the future eventually has its assassins kill off themselves. Writer-director Rian Johnson has concocted a rare thriller whose brains equal its action, telling the story with great style and provocative irony.

■■■

The top 10 films of 2012, according to AP Entertainment Writer Jake Coyle:

1 "Amour"—It's a rare thing to be in the hands of a master working at the top of his game. Michael Haneke's film about an aging Parisian couple and the intersection of tenderness and cruelty is devastating in both its story and execution.

2 "The Master"—In a year where digital overtook film as the dominant stuff of moviemaking, Paul Thomas Anderson's 70-mm post-WWII drama made a hypnotic case for celluloid. Anderson's film may

have dawdled to its end, failing to figure out what drew together a drifter (Joaquin Phoenix) and a cult leader (Philip Seymour Hoffman). But the postwar atmosphere is vivid: a searching landscape of broken and delusional men. Like the ship that brings the two together, rocking slowly past the Golden Gate, the movie drifts away.

3 "Margaret"—After a lengthy legal battle, a truncated version of playwright Kenneth Lonergan's follow-up to the brilliant "You Can Count on Me" was released quietly in late 2011. But it was this year when the real version saw the light of day on DVD. (It's three hours, but I promise it's not slow, thanks particularly to the daughter-mother duo of Anna Paquin and J. Smith-Cameron.) Seek it out. It's a fascinating if flawed New York masterwork, made with a humanistic touch unrivaled in movies.

4 "Moonrise Kingdom"—Wes Anderson dreams up a melancholy island of young love and Norman Rockwell. Sold.

5 "Not Fade Away"—I never knew the '60s but I suspect David Chase's first film has finally—after countless more extreme stories—nailed something authentic about the decade and about rock 'n' roll's atom-bomb-sized impact in suburban homes.

6 "Lincoln"—Steven Spielberg's historical drama, too, is an exhumation of the past, even if it ultimately fails to make flesh its title character (even Daniel Day-Lewis can't enliven such a calcified figure, especially with the incessant horn-tooting of John Williams' grandiose score). But it does succeed—unlike any movie before—in summoning a political world, peopled by colorful characters (James Spader, Tommy Lee

Jones) in and around Congress.

7 "Jeff, Who Lives at Home"—The Duplass brothers' man-child comedy is a rumpled sweatshirt of a movie. When Jason Segel, as a completely charming pothead, finally rises to the occasion, it's strangely moving.

8 "The Dust Bowl"—One of the most pleasing things of the year was to see a Ken Burns with some fire. In "Central Park Five," which he co-directed with his daughter Sarah Burns and David McMahon, he shed light on a miscarriage of justice. When lawyers for New York (who had refused to comment on the case) subpoenaed his notes, he flatly refused. In "The Dust Bowl," he made clear its contemporary and potentially polarizing lessons: that the federal government can do good and that we are capable of marring the environment horrendously.

9 "Holy Motors"—French, fantastical and nuthouse crazy, Leos Carax's film might seem the stuff of pretentious art house. But it's a simple day-in-the-life, only one in which limos talk and fingers get bitten off for the sake of Eva Mendes. Any references or meanings are irrelevant: It's a mad movie dream.

10 "Premium Rush"—How about Joseph Gordon-Levitt's year? Aside from roles in "Lincoln" and muddled but still thought-provoking "The Dark Knight Rises," he also starred in the excellent time-travel puzzle "Looper" and this seemingly forgettable but really quite fun genre pic about an elusive bike messenger. There may not have been anything as much fun at the movies this year as watching Michael Shannon as a corrupt, comically reckless cop disgusted by his ignoble two-wheeled prey.

Ryan Seacrest: 'Rockin' in another year

NEW YORK (AP)—Yes, Ryan Seacrest has a New Year's resolution for 2013: improve his skill at dancing.

"There's a Significant Other in my life who's very good at it," he notes. That would be professional dancer Julianne Hough, a two-time champ on "Dancing with the Stars" in whose proximity "I feel the pressure to be as good as she is. It sounds like a joke, but this is a serious thing for me to accomplish next year."

So add dancing lessons to the long list of projects that keep Seacrest famously fast on his feet. His numerous broadcast gigs include roles on E! Entertainment and NBC, a syndicated morning radio show for Clear Channel, as well as "American Idol," whose new season starts next month on Fox. Behind the cameras, he has a swiftly expanding production empire that includes the Kardashian portfolio of reality shows.

But as Monday nears, Seacrest is focused on this annual rite: "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest," which, with related programming, will blanket ABC from 8 p.m. until past 2 a.m. EST.

Booking musical acts has been in the works for months, Seacrest says. Performers include Carly Rae Jepsen, Neon Trees, Flo Rida and Pitbull, as well as Taylor Swift, in the headliner position just before midnight.

But Friday afternoon in Manhattan, Seacrest is soon due at a production meeting "to work out the nitty-gritty of the show—some of which we will stick to, some of which we won't."

Already he has appeared on "Good Morning America," then headed to the rooftop of One Times Square, where the huge crystal ball was poised for its flashy descent, along with half-a-dozen TV teams queued up to tape interviews with him.

An hour later, at ABC's Upper West Side headquarters, Seacrest has shed his top coat and taken a break to reflect on Monday's extravaganza. This will be his eighth New Year's Eve turn for ABC. But it's his first since Clark's death last April at age 82.

Clark, of course, originated "New Year's Rockin' Eve" four decades ago. And it is Clark on "Rockin' Eve" who gave Seacrest as a youngster his earliest memories of ringing in each new year.

"I'd like to say I can imagine how it's going to feel, but I'm not quite sure," says Seacrest. "I looked forward so much to each year that I did the show with him."

Seacrest recalls how typically he would be posted outside overlooking Times Square, while Clark, who had suffered a stroke in 2004, made brief appearances from indoors.

"Then, right after midnight, I would run inside and stand next to him, and he always has some funny, clever thing to make fun



Ryan Seacrest, producer and host of Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve on ABC, poses for a portrait Friday, Dec. 28, 2012 in New York.

of me about," says Seacrest, unwittingly speaking in the present tense. "I think I will really miss that moment this year."

The night will begin with a two-hour tribute, "New Year's Rockin' Eve Celebrates Dick Clark," hosted by Fergie and Jenny McCarthy.

Then Seacrest takes over for the countdown show at 10 p.m. EST.

"I definitely will say something about him, and it will be from the heart," Seacrest promises. "But the night will be, as he would want, a celebration of what's to come: Dick was always one to say, 'The show must go on.'"

That clearly resonates for the man who claims Clark as his mentor.

Seacrest, who marked his 38th birthday on Christmas Eve, grew up in Atlanta loving music and dreaming of a career in broadcasting.

From childhood, he was a student of Dick Clark, who in the 1950s had pioneered melding music, youth and TV on a show he called "American Bandstand."

"I loved the perception that people came together to hang out and be introduced to new music," Seacrest says. "Dick was brilliant at making everyone feel at home and comfortable, and never getting in the way. That's the key."

That became the key for Seacrest, who, today, is among the most accomplished at doing what he does. But just what does he do?

"At the doctor's office where it says 'Occupation,' I always have trouble knowing what to write in that box," he says with a laugh. "I usually put 'Host.' I enjoy bringing pop-culture moments and events to an audience, introducing the country to a promising new act or sitting down with an artist who has had a big hit."

"I like being the host of a party. I never feel like I need to be the star of it. Just host."

Seacrest wangled a shift on an Atlanta radio station when he was still in high school. So, from the start, he was live on the air, "and I felt comfortable when things didn't always go as planned. I didn't realize how valuable that would be until later, when I was standing on the 'American Idol' stage."

It's husband No. 3 for actress Kate Winslet

NEW YORK (AP)—Kate Winslet has tied the knot again.

The Oscar-winning actress wed Ned Rocknroll in New York earlier this month. The private ceremony was attended by Winslet's two children as well as a few friends and family members, her representative said Thursday.

It is the third marriage for the 37-year-old Winslet, who won a Best Actress Oscar for her performance in the 2008 film

"The Reader." She was previously married to film directors Jim Threapleton and Sam Mendes.

The 34-year-old Rocknroll, who was born Abel Smith, is a nephew of billionaire Virgin Group founder Richard Branson.

The couple had been engaged since last summer.



Winslet

In August 2011, Winslet and her children were staying at

Branson's house in the Caribbean when it caught fire during a tropical storm and burned down. Winslet carried Branson's 90-year-old mother to safety.

Branson was staying in another property on the island. No one was injured.

Katie Holmes' Broadway play 'Dead Accounts' closes

NEW YORK (AP)—Katie Holmes' return to Broadway will be much shorter than she would have liked.

The former Mrs. Cruise's play "Dead Accounts" will close within a week of the new year. Producers said Thursday that Theresa Rebeck's drama

will close on Jan. 6 after 27 previews and 44 performances.

The show, which opened to poor reviews on Nov. 29, stars Norbert Leo Butz as Holmes' onstage brother who returns to his Midwest home with a secret. Rebeck created the first season of NBC's "Smash" and several

well-received plays including "Seminar" and "Mauritius."

Holmes, who became a star in the teen soap opera "Dawson's Creek," made her Broadway debut in the 2008 production of "All My Sons." She was married to Tom Cruise from 2006 until this year.

Fans to introduce Beyoncé at Super Bowl halftime

NEW YORK (AP)—All the single ladies—and fellows—will have a chance to join Beyoncé on the field at the Super Bowl.

Pepsi announced Friday that fans will introduce the Grammy-winning diva when she takes the stage Feb. 3 at New Orleans' Mercedes-Benz Su-

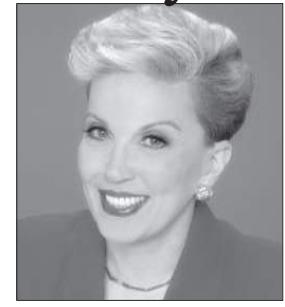
perdome. A contest that kicks off Saturday will allow fans to submit photos of themselves in various poses, including head bopping, feet tapping and hip shaking. Those pictures will be used in a TV ad to air ahead of Beyoncé's halftime performance, and 50 of those

who submit photos—along with a friend—will be selected to introduce the singer.

Photo contest details are at www.pepsi.com/halftime. The contest ends Jan. 19, but Jan. 11 is the cutoff date for those interested in introducing Beyoncé.

Rules of the road apply to all drivers—even you!

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I am a professional driver. Please allow me to offer some advice to everyone I share the road with:

(1) Please do not honk or display obscene gestures because I am driving the speed limit. It's not my fault that you're late.

(2) Please don't pass me on the right, using the curb lane, parking lane, bike lane or sidewalk. It's dangerous for me, for you, and for anyone who happens to be in those lanes legally.

(3) Please obey the stop signs, stoplights, yield signs and other signs on the road. They're there to protect people.

(4) Please put down that breakfast sandwich, cup of coffee, lunch or dinner. If you're that hungry, pull over to eat.

(5) Please turn off your cellphones while driving. Whatever it is, it can wait. And if it can't, you have no business being behind the wheel.

(6) If you must discipline your children, please pull over to do it. I have seen drivers wrap their vehicles around trees and lampposts because they had turned around to talk to their child.

I drive more than 1,000 miles a week, and I see more accidents than most will in a lifetime. Many of them could have been avoided simply by paying attention to the road. If you choose to ignore this advice, I can pretty much guarantee that you will injure, or possibly kill, someone eventually. If my letter prevents just one fatality, then it was well worth the time it took to write it.

MILWAUKEE MILE MAN

DEAR MILE MAN: Thank you for taking the time to write. As both a driver and a passenger, I have seen some frightening near-misses because drivers chose to ignore speed limits and run stop signs and stoplights. Usually the infractions are caused less because of thoughtlessness than by rudeness and an attitude that the rules of the road apply to everyone else.

And please don't think that automobile drivers are the only transgressors, because I have seen bikers and cyclists do some of the same things.

DEAR ABBY: Why do some people think it's acceptable to tuck in the tag on my shirt? It's bad enough when my mother does it, but I have had acquaintances and even strangers do it without asking.

I said something the last time it happened, and the woman had the gall to take offense! All I said was, "Please don't!" Am I wrong?

PLEASE DON'T IN TEXAS

DEAR PLEASE DON'T: I'm sure there are various reasons why people try to tuck in an errant tag—or remove a piece of lint—from a stranger's clothing. I suspect they range from attempting to be helpful, to impulsiveness to compulsive behavior.

However, because what the woman did made you uncomfortable, you were right to tell her that you didn't like it. She should have asked before touching a stranger because many people are sensitive to any breach of their personal space.

CONFIDENTIAL TO MY READERS: If you are partying tonight to celebrate the arrival of the new year, please don't drink and drive. Make sure you have a designated driver.

I wish you all a happy, healthy, prosperous 2013!

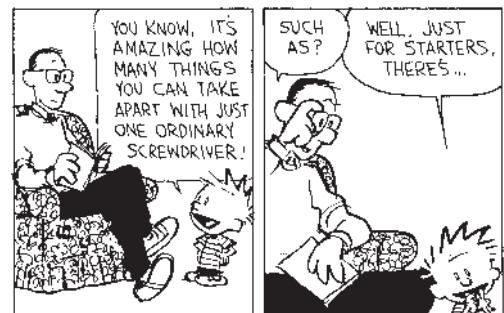
LOVE, ABBY

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$14 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Cookbook Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

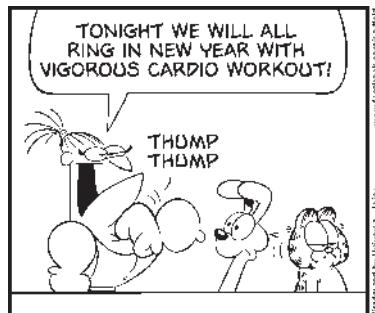
Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes



By Bill Waterson

Garfield®



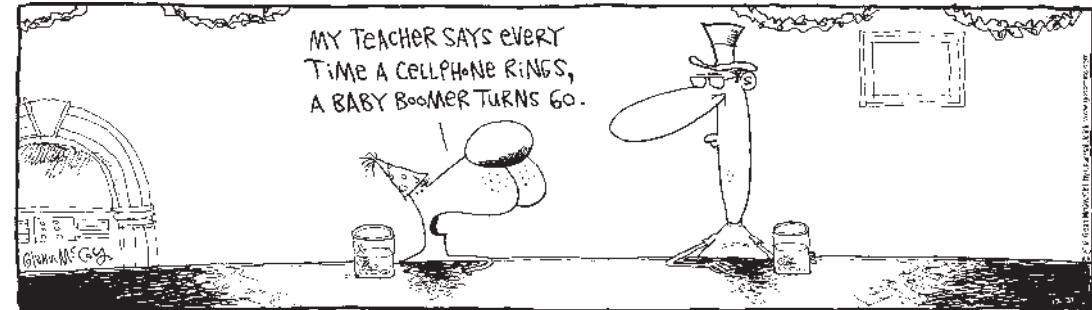
By Jim Davis

Adam@home



By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

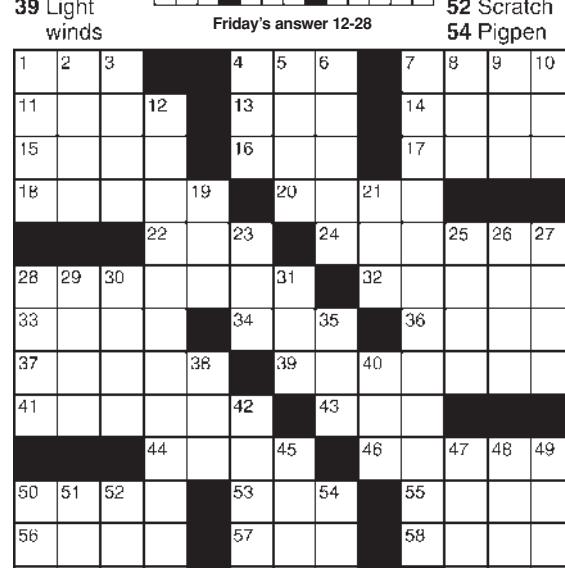


By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS		41		43		44		46		47		48		49		50		51		52		53		54		55		56		57		58		59		60																												
1 Cleopatra's slayer		41 Contacts, e.g.		61 Bow the head		19 Use the microwave		21 Noah's boat		23 Deity		25 Court-room cry		26 Bowler's pathway		27 Guitars' kin		28 "Monopoly" corner		29 Land measure		30 "Be a sport"		31 Bathroom fixture		35 Pal		38 Evergreen type		40 Yale student		42 Tendon		45 Erupt, as Old Faithful		47 Press		48 Norway's capital		49 Temperament		50 Angry		51 Id		52 Scratch		53 Greek consonants		54 Pigpen														
4 Brian Williams' employer		42 Small branch		43 Quoted		44 Figure of speech		45 Note from the boss		46 Figure of speech		47 Note from the boss		48 Author Fleming		49 Wildebeest		50 Possesses		51 2012		52 Hurricane nickname		53校园		54校园		55 Approximately		56 Culture medium		57 Superlative ending		58 Contendere		59 Campus housing		60 "How come?"																										
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Friday's answer 12-28																																																																



For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

STUMPED?

1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

6	4							9
1	9							2
2	4	8	9					7
9	5			1				
2	5			1				
7								
7	4	6	8	9				
6					3			7
5					7			

Difficulty Level ★

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's SUDOKU Answer

2	5	4	9	1	7	3	6	8
7	9	3	2	6	8	1	4	5
1	6	8	3	4	5	2	9	7
5	3	9	1	7	6	4	8	2
6	8	2	4	5	9	7	3	1
4	7	1	8	2	3	6	5	9
3	2	7	5	9	4	8	1	6
9	4	6	7	8	1	5	2	3
8	1	5	6	3	2	9	7	4

Difficulty Level ★★★

12/31

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

SRI LANKAN TEAS

Solution: 11 letters

T	C	H	R	A	I	N	N	R	E	N	S	P	I	T
S	E	U	I	E	P	U	I	O	O	T	H	G	I	L
E	N	M	T	G	T	C	A	M	L	L	S	N	A	P
V	U	I	P	T	H	A	E	R	U	Y	L	A	L	L
R	W	D	Y	E	I	L	W	G	A	S	E	T	A	
A	A	I	R	A	R	N	A	I	N	T	T	C	D	N
H	R	T	E	S	O	A	G	N	T	A	A	E	A	T
T	A	Y	W	A	B	R	T	D	H	R	M	R	E	
O	E	D	O	N	A	O	R	U	E	S	E	O	K	E
O	L	N	L	M	L	M	E	D	R	E	B			

Sports year: Sad sagas the story of 2012

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP SPORTS WRITER

TOP STORIES 2012 Jerry Sandusky will spend the rest of his life in prison, Penn State football played under NCAA sanctions and Joe Paterno passed away.

Lance Armstrong abandoned his fight against doping allegations. Roger Clemens won his court battle, despite lingering skepticism over whether he used steroids. The impact of early-stage dementia forced Pat Summitt to step down from her coaching perch.

Again and again, it seemed, the sports world in 2012 saw the end of long tales with tragic or, at best, bittersweet endings.

And in so many cases, off-the-field news overshadowed what happened on it:

■ In State College, Pa., where the Sandusky mess at Penn State destroyed lives and radically changed the face of a proud football program.

■ In Washington, where Clemens emerged from court a winner, after a mistrial the first time around on charges he lied to Congress about performance-enhancing drug use.

■ In Kansas City, Mo., where Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher shot and killed his girlfriend, then drove to the team's facility in the Arrowhead Stadium complex, thanked his coach and general manager, and turned the gun on himself.

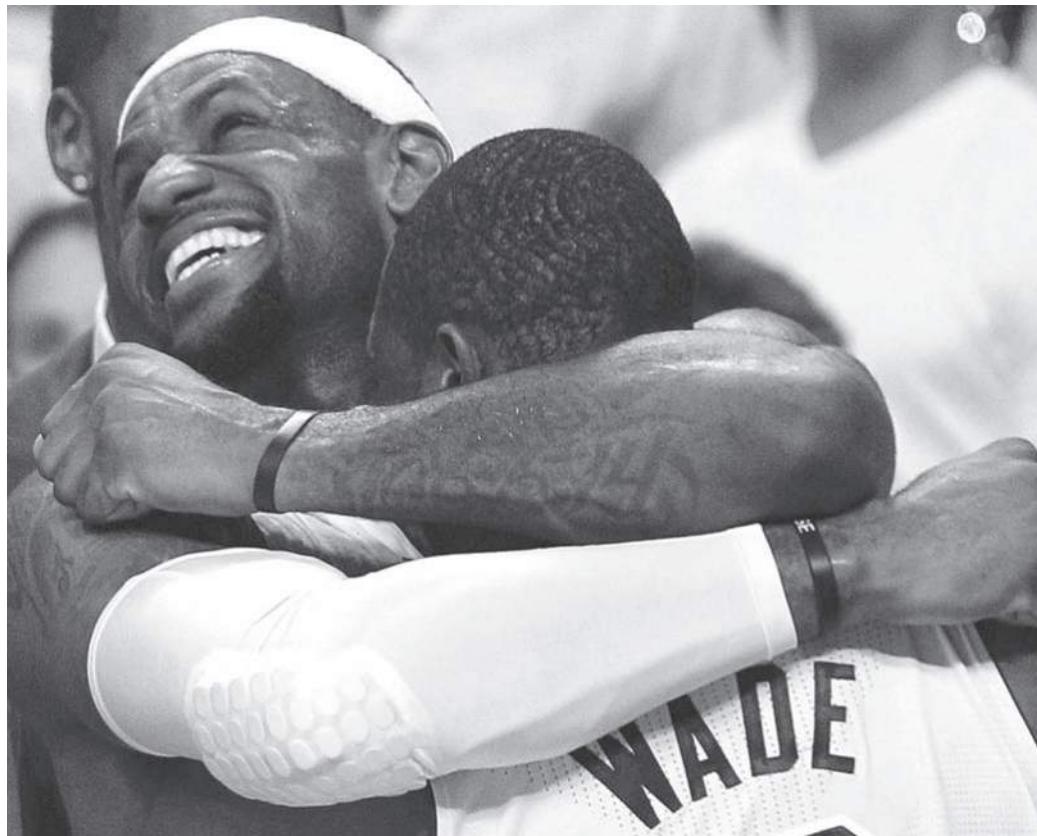
■ In Austin, Texas, where the news broke that Armstrong decided to give up his long fight against doping charges, saying "enough is enough" but acknowledging no wrongdoing. The move began the cyclist's swift fall from his spot as cancer-fighting sports hero in the public eye. And though he maintains he was victimized by a "witch hunt," Armstrong still was stripped of all seven of his Tour de France victories.

"We must create a culture in which people are not afraid to speak up, management is not compartmentalized, all are expected to demonstrate the highest ethical standards, and the operating policy is open, collegial and collaborative," Penn State President Rodney Erickson said the day the NCAA levied massive sanctions against the Nittany Lions including a four year postseason ban.

Erickson was speaking of his own school.

But in 2012, at least some of those lessons could have applied to any number of topics.

Sure, there were amazing moments to remember and savor. Michael Phelps became the most decorated Olympian in history, adding to his enormous swimming haul with six more medals at the London Games, where the United States topped the winning charts once again. Usain Bolt became the first man



In this June 21, 2012 file photo, Miami Heat forward LeBron James, left, and guard Dwyane Wade embrace in the final moments of the second half of their 121-106 win over the Oklahoma City Thunder in Game 5 of the NBA Finals basketball series in Miami. As the NBA Most Valuable Player, Olympic champion, and, at long last, NBA champion, James, who was ripped by so many for leaving the Cleveland Cavaliers as a free agent and signing with Miami, cemented his position that he would never again be criticized for not winning the big prize.

to win the 100- and 200-meter dashes at consecutive Olympics, Eli Manning and the New York Giants reigned supreme in the NFL, San Francisco stormed its way to the World Series title, the Los Angeles Kings hoisted the Stanley Cup (no telling if any other team will anytime soon) and LeBron James and the Miami Heat silenced doubters by winning the NBA title.

Yet in a year like this, such times of achievement and triumph seemed few and far between.

Take March 21, for example. That was the day when Tim Tebow was traded by Denver to the New York Jets, a huge story simply for the Tebowmania factor—and one that wasn't even the biggest in the NFL that day, not with the announcement that New Orleans Saints coach Sean Payton would serve a yearlong suspension for his role in the bounty scandal.

Try August 15, when baseball got to experience a rarity—Felix Hernandez pitching the first perfect game in Seattle Mariners' history—and an all-too-common occurrence, that being someone testing positive for something, in this case San Francisco's Melky Cabrera basically forfeiting any shot at the MVP or the NL batting title by being suspended 50 games following a positive test for testosterone.

Or Oct. 10, when Raul Ibanez showed off a flair for the dramatic—twice—by hitting tying and winning home runs as the New York Yankees beat the Baltimore Orioles 3-2 to take a 2-1 lead in the AL Division Series, an enormous moment by any measure. Of course, those blasts came on the same day that the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency re-

leased a report in which Armstrong was portrayed as the lead of the "most professionalized and successful doping program that sport has ever seen."

As stunning as Armstrong's fall was, what went on at Penn State continued to dominate the sports lexicon.

Sandusky was arrested in November 2011, but resolution didn't really begin until 2012—part of why the case was voted the top sports story of the year by The Associated Press, based on balloting by U.S. editors and news directors.

The longtime Penn State de-

fensive coordinator was con-

victed of 45 counts of abuse

involving 10 boys, and later

sentenced to 30 to 60 years in

prison, which means Sandusky

is likely to die behind bars.

Paterno succumbed to lung

cancer in January, and a statue

of his likeness outside Beaver Stadium was removed six months later, one day before the NCAA announced a \$60 million fine and four years of scholarship reductions. Still to come: civil suits brought by Sandusky's victims and the trials of former school administrators accused of neglecting their duty to report allegations.

"We can expect more fallout," Erickson said.

Paterno is still considered by many as a sympathetic figure, and still revered as a role model by some.

Clemens' legacy doesn't seem to resonate the same way with sports fans. It's almost like his courtroom win was one that many did not expect to see happen, and it may be his last big victory for a while. Clemens—the only seven-time Cy Young Award winner—is on the Hall

of Fame ballot for the first time this year, and a recent survey of voters by the AP shows that he is likely to fall well short of the number of votes necessary for induction in 2013.

Clemens was accused by former personal trainer Brian McNamee in the Mitchell Report on drugs in baseball of using steroids and HGH, allegations Clemens denied before Congress. Eventually, after a Justice Department investigation looked into whether Clemens lied under oath, a grand jury indicted him on two counts of perjury, three counts of making false statements and one count of obstructing Congress.

He was acquitted of all the charges on June 19 after a 10-week trial.

"I'm very thankful," Clemens said. "It's been a hard five years."

Armstrong's fight lasted even longer than that.

The testicular-cancer survivor won the Tour de France seven times, all while dogged by the stigma of he-must-be-cheating. Armstrong was never caught by a drug test, but rather was ultimately done in largely by the words of his former teammates. Armstrong continues to deny doping, but simply said his fight had gone on long enough.

Giving up has come with a price. Armstrong cut ties to his well-known charity, Livestrong, and longtime sponsor Nike—among other corporations—cut ties with him.

And as for Summitt, one of the greatest names in coaching, her last loss was against an invisible opponent.

Summitt stepped down as Tennessee's coach in April, a few months after revealing she has been diagnosed with early onset dementia. Summitt led Tennessee to eight national titles in her 38-year tenure, winning 1,098 Division I games along the way.

"It's never a good time," Summitt said. "But you have to

find the time that you think is the right time and that is now."

Still, the year wasn't gloom and doom for everyone, not by a long shot.

Alabama got a chance to avenge a loss to LSU and win college football's national championship, the second for the Tide in three years. The Tide will be back in the BCS title game again in January, against rising and surprising Notre Dame.

Miguel Cabrera of the Detroit Tigers became baseball's first Triple Crown winner in 45 years. The Kings put together a stunning run through the Stanley Cup playoffs, the last celebratory moment the NHL got to enjoy before more labor strife led to a lockout. Baylor went

40-0 for the NCAA women's basketball title, while Kentucky returned to the top of the men's game. And the Giants (New York) and Giants (San Francisco) more than lived up to their names, in championship fashion.

But if there was one happy ending among all those the drawn-out sagas of this sports year, it was the year LeBron James had with the Heat.

Miami won the NBA title, beating Oklahoma City in five games for the franchise's second title and the first for James, who left Cleveland for the Heat two years earlier for moments such as that. He won the league's MVP award. He won the NBA Finals MVP award. He even helped the Americans win another basketball gold medal at the London Olympics.

After all he went through—from hero to villain, revered to pariah for his infamous "Decision"—James found a way to shake it all off and complete his quest.

"It's a year I know I'm never going to forget," James said.

Not many people will.

Thing is, in so many cases in 2012, it isn't for the right reasons.

NHL, union spend day on conference calls



NEW YORK
(AP)—Lots of questions, but still no answers in the NHL labor fight.

The league and the players' association spent much of Saturday talking to each other via conference call. The conversations were strictly for the purpose of sharing information regarding the new contract offer the NHL made to the union late Thursday.

The initial thought was that the sides would get together Sunday in New York to hold official negotiations for the first time in weeks, but those weren't scheduled before discussions ended Saturday.

Staff level calls were ex-

pected to resume Sunday, which could include face-to-face talks at some point, but no actual bargaining meetings have been set.

"Some more informational sessions in the morning," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Associated Press regarding Sunday. "Nothing planned beyond that."

The union pored over the latest NHL proposal aimed at ending the lockout that reached its 105th day Saturday and saving the delayed hockey season. The league would like to reach a deal no later than Jan. 11, which would allow training camps to start the following day, and a 48-game season to begin Jan. 19.

Saturday's conference calls were scheduled Friday night

so the union could ask league officials questions about the nearly 300-page proposal. Whether enough progress will be made to lead to face-to-face talks remains to be seen.

The sides haven't gotten together since Dec. 13 with federal mediators. Bargaining sessions with only the NHL and union involved haven't been held since Dec. 6, when talks abruptly ended after the players' association made a counterproposal to the league's previous offer. The league said that offer was contingent on the union accepting three elements unconditionally and without further bargaining.

The NHL then pulled all existing offers off the table. Two days of sessions with mediators

the following week ended without any progress made.

The players' association's executive board and negotiating committee went over the new proposal during an internal conference call Friday.

A person familiar with key points of the offer told The Associated Press that the league proposed raising the limit of individual free-agent contracts to six years from five—seven years if a team re-signs its own player; raising the salary variance from one year to another to 10 percent, up from 5 percent; and one compliance buyout for the 2013-14 season that wouldn't count toward a team's salary cap but would be included in the overall players' share of income.

Thunder roll to win over Rockets, 124-94

HOUSTON (AP)—Russell Westbrook scored 28 points and Kevin Durant added 26 as the Oklahoma City Thunder built a big lead in the second quarter and rolled to a 124-94 win over the Houston Rockets on Saturday night.

Durant scored 11 points during a 16-0 run by the Thunder to end the first half and extend the lead to 18. Oklahoma City had another big run early in the third quarter to put the game further out of reach.

Former Thunder sixth man James Harden scored 25 for the Rockets, who went cold on offense for long stretches.

It was Oklahoma City's second win this season over Houston, after taking the first meeting 120-98.

Kevin Martin, who came to Oklahoma City in the trade for Harden, finished 19 points and five 3-pointers. Westbrook had eight rebounds and eight assists.

Marcus Morris scored a career-high 24 points for Houston.

Hornets 98, Bobcats 95

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Eric Gordon had 24 points and seven assists, helping New Orleans overcome a 21-point first-half deficit and extend Charlotte's losing streak to 18 games.

The Bobcats are one game away from a winless December. They haven't won since Nov. 24.

Gordon, who hadn't played since April 22 following arthroscopic right knee surgery, was 5 of 13 from the field and 12 of 14 from the free throw line in 24 minutes.

Ryan Anderson had 19 points and made a pair of 3-pointers in the final period as the Hornets won for the second time in three games.

Michael Kidd-Gilchrist had 22 points and nine rebounds and Gerald Henderson added 19 points for the Bobcats.

Nets 103, Cavaliers 100

In New York, Brook Lopez scored a season-high 35 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, and Brooklyn improved to 2-0 under interim coach P.J. Carlesimo by beating Cleveland.

Lopez followed his 26-point, 11-rebound performance in a victory Friday over Charlotte by shooting 13 of 20 from the field, making a number of timely baskets in the fourth quarter that the Nets ultimately needed to hold on.

Deron Williams and Joe Johnson each scored 15 points for the Nets, who fired coach Avery Johnson on Thursday and followed with two victories over losing teams. But now, they head off for major tests at San Antonio and Oklahoma City.

CJ Miles scored 33 points and made eight 3-pointers for the Cavs, but Kyrie Irving capped a miserable shooting night when his tying 3-point attempt went



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook (0) drives to the basket for a layup past Houston Rockets center Cole Aldrich (31) and forward Marcus Morris, right, during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, Dec. 29, 2012, in Houston.

in and out. He finished with 13 points on 5-of-16 shooting.

Tristan Thompson added 17 points and 15 rebounds for the Cavaliers, who played without center Anderson Varejao because of a knee injury.

Grizzlies 81, Nuggets 72

In Memphis, Tennessee, Rudy Gay scored eight of his 19 points down the stretch to help Memphis beat Denver.

Gay's rush was part of 10 straight points for the Grizzlies, breaking open a 68-all game with 4:45 left. His baseline jumper with 1:25 left gave Memphis a 10-point lead, helping the Grizzlies snap a two-

game skid.

Zach Randolph had 12 points for Memphis, which won despite shooting 40 percent. The Grizzlies outscored the Nuggets 28-15 in the fourth quarter.

Andre Iguodala, Corey Brewer and JaVale McGee all had 12 points for Denver, which had its two-game winning streak stopped. Danilo Gallinari, coming off a career-high 39 points Friday night against Dallas, was held to seven on 2-of-8 shooting.

Hawks 109, Pacers 100

In Atlanta, Lou Williams had 21 points and a career-high 12 assists, Al Horford added 20 points

Saints, coach Sean Payton agree to terms on deal



NEW ORLEANS (AP)—The New Orleans Saints and suspended coach Sean Payton will indeed be together again next season as the bounty scandal fades into history and the bid to win a second Super Bowl resumes.

Payton has agreed in principle to a multiyear contract extension, the team said.

"Very happy it is official," quarterback Drew Brees said in an email to the AP. "Never had any doubts."

Payton was due to begin his seventh season as the Saints' head coach in 2012 before being suspended for the whole season by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell in connection with the

NFL's bounty investigation.

"I am pleased that Sean Payton will be our head coach for a long time," owner Tom Benson said in a statement. "Now we can focus our attention on building on the winning tradition with the Saints that Sean has played such a large role in."

Payton signed an extension in 2011 worth more than \$6 million a year that would have kept him in New Orleans through 2015, but Goodell objected to certain language in that deal, leaving Payton's future uncertain until the deal was reached Friday. The language in question in the previous extension gave Payton the right to opt out early if general manager Mickey Loomis left the club for any reason.

The new agreement also must be approved by the NFL. The team did not disclose the length of the extension or financial terms.

Payton is the only coach in Saints history to win a Super Bowl, a title earned at the end of the 2009 season. But his legacy was tarnished by the NFL's bounty probe, as Goodell ruled that Payton failed to exert proper institutional control over a cash-for-hits bounty program run by former defensive coordinator Gregg Williams from 2009-2011.

Although the Saints objected to the characterization of what coaches and players have said was nothing more than a performance pool for big plays, Goodell suspended Payton for

and Atlanta beat Indiana for its fourth consecutive win.

David West scored a game-high 29 points for the Pacers, who had won four straight and seven of eight.

With Josh Smith, Atlanta's leading scorer, unable to play because of a right hip flexor, Hawks coach Larry Drew started Zaza Pachulia, who responded with 17 points and a game-high 14 rebounds.

Indiana never got closer than three in the fourth quarter after Paul George's three-point play made it 91-88 at the 5:18 mark.

Raptors 123, Magic 88

In Orlando, Florida, DeMar DeRozan scored 21 points and Jose Calderon added 15 points and 10 assists, helping Toronto to an easy victory over injury-depleted Orlando.

Rookie Ed Davis had 18 points and seven rebounds as Toronto won for the seventh time in eight games. The Raptors, who hit a season-high 15 3-pointers, got 16 points apiece from Kyle Lowry and Terrence Ross.

Rookie Andrew Nicholson led Orlando with a career-high 22 points. Arron Afflalo added 14 points and Ish Smith had 13 points and six assists.

The Raptors hit nine of their first 10 attempts from behind the 3-point line and built a 67-47 halftime lead. Orlando cut it to 76-65 with 5:16 left in the third quarter, but that was as close as the Magic would get the rest of the game.

The Magic played without starting point guard Jameer Nelson (hip) and his backup, E'Twaun Moore (elbow).

Timberwolves 111, Suns 107

In Minneapolis, Nikola Pekovic had 28 points and 11 rebounds, and Kevin Love added 23 points and 18 boards to lift Minnesota over Phoenix.

Andrei Kirilenko had 20 points and five rebounds for the Timberwolves, who were miss-

the entire season. The commissioner also suspended Loomis for half of the season and assistant head coach Joe Vitt for six games.

Payton is 62-34 in regular-season games as Saints coach and 5-3 in the postseason. During the three seasons before his suspension, the Saints won 41 regular-season and playoff games combined, more than any other team in the NFL.

Payton has primarily handled the offense in New Orleans, teaming up with Brees to break numerous NFL and club records. The single-season NFL records set by the Saints in 2011 included yards passing by a team (5,505) and a quarterback (5,476). The Saints also set a

place of Rajon Rondo, a late scratch for Boston because of a bruised right thigh and hip. The Celtics (14-15) have lost six of eight to fall below .500 for the first time in almost two months.

Bucks 104, Heat 85

In Milwaukee, Brandon Jennings scored 25 points and Mike Dunleavy had 13 of his 18 in the fourth quarter as Milwaukee beat Miami to spoil Dwyane Wade's return.

Wade was back after serving a one-game suspension for flailing his leg and making contact with guard Ramon Sessions' groin during the Heat's victory over Charlotte on Wednesday. Wade sat out Miami's 109-99 loss to Detroit on Friday night, which snapped the Heat's six-game winning streak.

Wade had 24 points on 10-of-19 shooting. LeBron James scored 26 as Miami failed to reach 100 points for just the third time in 28 games.

Luc Richard Mbah a Moute scored 19 points for the Bucks, and Larry Sanders had 16 points, 11 rebounds and four blocks.

Dunleavy also had nine rebounds, six assists and three steals for the Bucks, who outscored Miami 35-14 in the fourth. The Heat (20-8) fell to 6-6 on the road.

Trail Blazers 89, 76ers 85

In Portland, Oregon, Nicolas Batum had 22 points, eight assists and seven rebounds, Damian Lillard added 20 points and Portland beat Philadelphia for its eighth straight victory at home.

J.J. Hickson had 16 points and 13 rebounds for the Trail Blazers. LaMarcus Aldridge added 16 points.

True Holiday had 29 points, nine assists and nine rebounds to lead the Sixers, who have lost eight of 10. Thaddeus Young added 17 points.

Portland opened the fourth quarter with a 7-0 run to take a 10-point advantage.

record for total offensive yards with 7,474.

Although speculation ran rampant that Payton could essentially become a free agent after this season and end up elsewhere, Brees repeatedly said he would be "shocked" if Payton ended up anywhere but New Orleans next season. Brees is under contract with the Saints through the 2016 season, and Payton was the driving force in the Saints' effort to acquire Brees as a free agent in 2006.

Without Payton on the sideline this season, the Saints missed the playoffs for the first time since 2008. Brees remained prolific, but his 18 interceptions also tied for a league high heading into the final weekend of the season.

Signature events draw crowd



XTERRA Saipan Championship participants rush to the waters off Micro Beach during the swim leg of the Xterra World's Crown Jewel.

The CNMI's signature competitions soldiered on in 2012 despite the economic challenges the Commonwealth faced.

The 2012 Saipan Marathon drew the most participants among the competitions held in the CNMI, luring nearly 800 runners in March. Saipan's runner Mamiko Oshima-Bergner ruled the women's marathon, Beijing's Shuai Yang took the men's crown, and former Olympian Eric Wainaina Wahinya of Kenya ruled the ultra marathon (50K).

Sharks make a splash



WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
The CFL Sharks carry out a late fall practice on Miguel "Tan Ge" Pangelinan Ball Field.

The Commonwealth Football League Sharks made history this year when it appeared in Manila, Philippines' very first 11-man tackle football game last November at the Phil-Sports Complex Track & Oval Field.

The group was not able to pull off a game-changing drive late in the match and succumbed to the host team Punishers, 13-6, but it was a very close battle to the end.

Despite the loss, it was the first time in nearly seven years that a football team from the CNMI took part in any kind of gridiron game. The CFL has long been dormant, having played its last game in December 2005 when the Shell Lightning defeated the Express Electronics Eagles, 16-8, in the championship game.

The Sharks plan on inviting a select group from Guam's Miller-Lite Football League in 2013.

Completing Saipan's March trifecta were the Xterra Saipan and Tagaman Triathlon, which also drew several off-island participants.

Switzerland's Renata Bucher reclaimed the women's tiara she lost to Shonny Vanlandingham in 2011, while newcomer and Australia's Ben Allen topped the men's fielding, beating former champion and Olympian Olivier Marceau.

In the Tagaman, another first-timer won with France's Cedric Lassonde pulling off an upset

over Allen, while United Kingdom's Jacqui Slack also notched her first win against Bucher. Two more swim-bike-run events were held in the CNMI—the Tinian Turquoise Blue Triathlon and Rota Blue Triathlon—which also drew crowds from Japan and Korea.

Besides having pro triathletes, the CNMI also hosted pro beach volleyball player in the first quarter of 2012 with the staging of the Marianas Beach Volleyball Cup. Pros from the U.S., Japan, New Zealand, and Korea were in town and played with and against local bets, while players from neighboring Guam also joined

the annual competition.

Japan's Hiroyo Kenada and Mengumi Murakami with their coach Tsuyoshi "Go" Mochizuki, Ty Loomis, and John Carlucci of the U.S., and New Zealand's Kurt Peters also conducted clinics at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

The 2012 Hell of Marianas Century Cycle Race was the last signature competition the CNMI hosted this year. Unfortunately, the 100K race was also the last for host Pacific Islands Club.

The around-the-island bike race lured 170 bikers, including a big group of riders from Russia, Japan, and Korea.

Saipan hosts 14th Micronesian Cup

Over 200 participants from Guam, Hong Kong, Palau, Japan, and the CNMI appeared in the 14th Micronesian Cup held on Saipan last October.

The event was organized by the Northern Marianas National Paddle Sports Federation under tournament director Rob Jordan and in

Busy year for hoops

Local basketball was pretty active in 2012 with different leagues played in various courts on the island.

The year started with the Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization Boys Basketball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium. The visiting Tinian High School went on to claim the boys title after beating the MHS Dolphins in the finals. The Lady Dolphins redeemed MHS' pride after prevailing in the girls title match against Mt. Carmel School.

Still in inter-school competition, Grace Christian Academy and Whispering Palms topped the boys and girls junior varsity divisions of the 2012 Coalition of Private School

Sports Basketball League, while Saipan International School and GCA ruled the varsity girls and boys categories.

The same players who participated in the school leagues also played in the U16 and U18 division of the Rotary caging, while the CNMI's cagebelles had their separate contests with Kanoa Resort hosting various tournaments.

The Commonwealth's youth players also joined the U17 Micronesian Basketball Tournament, competing against eventual champion Guam and Palau.

Meanwhile, adult leagues were busy in 2012 with the staging of the DLX, QQ, Blue Haus, UFO, and Emon Lodge cagings.



SAIPAN TRIBUNE
Blue Haus' Badong Camacho, left, fishes for a foul on QQ Rent A Car's Elgene Mangali during their title game in the DLX caging at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

Poksa women and Hong Kong United men and mixed long distance crews dominated the field with the Belau Kanoe Club of Palau sweeping the mixed 500-meter sprint and 1,500-meter categories.



WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
The Saipan Outrigger Canoe Club men's crew digs hard for a strong finish during this year's 14th Annual Micronesian Cup race series held in the waters off Kanoa Resort in late October.

Record feats in swimming, athletics

The CNMI's track stars and swimmers had record stints in off-island tournaments in 2012.

Yvonne Bennett, Rachel Abrams, Reylynn Sapong, and Lia Rangamar formed the first-ever CNMI relay team that ran in the Oceania Regional Championships and went on to place third (53.79 seconds) in the 4x100m relay race at the Barlow Park in Cairns, Australia, in June.

Abrams then crushed her personal best in the 200m run twice, doing it first during the qualifying heat when she timed in at 27.20 seconds. Her previous PBT was 27.46 seconds made at the 2011 Pacific Games in New Caledonia. She advanced to the finals of the U20 200m race where she reset her PBT after clocking in at 26.45 seconds.

Besides the relay race, Rangamar also joined javelin throw and set a new PB and CNMI mark with her 35.31 meters. She surpassed the 35.17m she also posted in the 2011 edition of the championships in Apia,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members and officials of the CNMI Team pose for a group photo during the opening ceremony for the Oceania Regional Championships 2012 at the Barlow Park in Cairns, Australia.

Samoa. Her 2011 mark eclipsed the 29-year-old CNMI national record of Emiliana Quitugua, who listed 34.68m in the first Pacific Mini Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands in 1981.

Michael Mancao and Beo Ngirchongor were in the same tournament in Cairns and set records, too. Mancao marked a new CNMI junior record in the

800m after submitting 2:07:10, while Ngirchongor had a PBT in 400m race (55.05 seconds).

In swimming, Rezne Wong lived up to his lofty billing as the CNMI's top swimmer in 2012 after representing the Commonwealth well in two off-island tournaments.

The University of Hawaii-Manoa swim team member was



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI Team's Rezne Wong, Victoria Chentsova, and Kensuke Kimura pose for a group during the opening ceremony for 11th FINA World Swimming Championships at the Sinan Erdem Arena in Istanbul, Turkey.

the lone CNMI entry to the 9th Oceania Swimming Championships in New Caledonia, raced in six events at the Guy Verlaguet pool in Dumbéa, reset one CNMI

national record, and made it to the finals in all of his events.

He timed in at 1:07.29 in the 100m breaststroke to break his own record of 1:07.66 posted in

Aug. 16, 2011 during the 2011 Summer Universiade in Shenzhen, China.

About six months after the competition in New Caledonia, Wong donned the colors of the CNMI anew, joining Kensuke Kimura and Victoria Chentsova and coach Minerva Cabrera in Istanbul, Turkey for the 11th FINA World Swimming Championships.

In Turkey, Wong and company crushed their entry times. The 21-year-old CNMI swimmer joined the 50m freestyle, 50m and 100m breaststroke, and 100m and 200m individual medley, Kimura raced in the 50m breaststroke and freestyle events, 100m breaststroke, and the 100m and 200m individual medley, and Chentsova competed in the 100m backstroke and 200m freestyle.

Wong also ruled the preliminary races on his heat in the 50m freestyle, 50m breaststroke, and 100 and 200m IM.

Little League comes close

The CNMI Little League program seized three out of four finals appearances in the 2012 Asia-Pacific Little League Regional Championship tournaments.

The CNMI junior division (13 to 14 year-olds) won four out of five pool play matches in Vietnam before falling in the end to Chinese-Taipei, 1-5. The team also took home multiple individual performance awards that were offered during the awards ceremony, including best pitcher (Kainoa Wanket), a gold glove (Jhace Palacios), a most home run trophy (Daron Jones), and fastest base runner spoils (Kenji Yamagata).

The CNMI senior level (15 to 16) all-stars held its own destiny coming into the final day of competition, but fell short in a must-win match against New Zealand, 2-1.

The CNMI Big Leaguers (17



WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
The CNMI Senior All-Stars celebrate a win during the 2012 Asia-Pacific Little League Regional Championship tournament held at Guam's Paseo Stadium.

to 18) were locked in a three-way tie and thus needed a shutout victory coming into the last day of competition, and though those hopes were over after just two innings, the band went on to upset host-rival Guam, 9-5, in the final standoff. The Philippines earned

the World Series berth in the end, though the CNMI's two losses both came by just one run.

The CNMI major division (11 to 12) group made it to the semifinals, but ran into a stout Taichung-Taipei host team and bowed, 8-2.

Players from the various clubs in the M-League are also selected to join the CNMI Team, which was invited to compete in the AFC Challenge Cup 2014 Qualifiers. It will be the first time for the Commonwealth's male strikers to participate in the Asian Football Confederation event and it moved the CNMI closer to its dream of becoming a regular

member of the AFC and eventually the FIFA.

In the AFC Challenge Cup 2014 Qualifiers set in April this year, the Blue Ayuyus will be playing against Palestine, Bangladesh, and host Nepal.

Besides the tournament in Nepal, NMIFA was also invited to the AFC U13 Girls Football Tournament 2012, AFC U16 Championship 2013, AFC U14 Boys Festival of Football, and AFC U16 Championship 2014.

In local events, NMIFA either hosted or sanctioned various competitions, which catered to all age groups, genders, and skill levels. It had the fall and spring youth leagues (U6, U8, U10, U12, U15, and U18 age groups), futsal leagues for both men's and women's divisions, U15 and U18, and co-ed U12, and beach soccer tournaments.

The association also continued to boost its referee and coaching stock, hosting clinics and seminars and even sending individuals to off-island training.

Jones makes the grade



WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
Joshua Jones eyes his target from the mound for the Colby Community College Trojans during the 2012 preseason in Kansas.

Kagman's golden boy Joshua Jones was announced as All-Conference starter for NJCCA 2013 Spring season as a freshman southpaw pitcher for the Colby Community College Trojans.

Jones gave up six hits and five walks with 32 strikeouts during 20 innnings in the pre-season and maintained a perfect 0.00 Earned Run Average to earn the nod as a starter this coming Spring.

It capped an auspicious year for Jones as he also earned his first NMASA Male Athlete of the Year award in February 2012.

He took the coveted plum after leading the CNMI to a gold medal win against Guam in the 2011 Pacific Games in New Caledonia.

The lefty pitched for the CNMI and did a superb job at the mound, lifting the Commonwealth to an 8-4 victory against Guam in the finals.

Emmanuel hauls record-breaking billfish



Last July, Emmanuel's captain Michael James and crewmembers George Arriola, Frank James, and John Hattig—all of Guam—landed a record-breaking 942-lb billfish six hours into the 17th Annual Saipan Fishermen's Association International Fishing Tournament and won \$10,000.

The monster marlin measured in at 11 and 1/2 feet and did not fit on the weight station. After being measured on a boom truck, the result dethroned the late great Danny Agulto's previous mark of 624.34 lbs from 1997. A total of 49 boats made up the 2012 field.

The crew of Guam's Emmanuel pose with its record-breaking 942-lb billfish at the Smiling Cove Weight Station, highlighting SFA's 17th Annual International Fishing Derby held back in July.

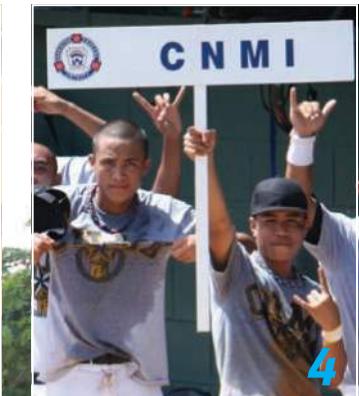
WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND



SAIPAN TRIBUNE
NMIFA officials pose with guests during the launching of the M-League in September at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Saipan Tribune Sports

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CNMI coach Jeff Race, center, poses with his players before starting their training session at the Pacific Islands Club hard court.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Net gains for youth tennis in '12

By TRIBUNE SPORTS STAFF

If CNMI sluggers took center stage in 2011, the spotlight belonged to the Commonwealth's youth tennis players in 2012.



Coach Jeff Race's young wards had remarkable performances in two off-island tournaments this year, proving that the CNMI has one of the strongest and successful tennis programs in the Pacific region.

First up for the Commonwealth's youth tennis players was the 2012 North Pacific Qualifying Tournament held

in Guam last June. The CNMI Team, which was pitted against the host, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia, clinched five of the six singles division titles and had 17 players advancing to the Final 4

Thea Minor and Christian Miller topped the U18 division, Mikayla Lopez won the girls U15, and Michael Ren and Carol Lee swept the U12 category. The CNMI missed the singles sweep after Chris Cajigan bowed to Guam's Derek Okuhama in the boys U15.

On top of racking up the most first place finishes, four CNMI bets logged spotless records in the NPQ and Race's team

posted the highest winning percentage among the four participating nations.

Lee, Lopez, Minor, and Ren never dropped a single set in Guam and allowed no more than three points to their respective foes. Overall, the CNMI Team competed in 187 matches, won 158 and lost only 29 for an impressive winning percentage of 84 percent. Guam was way behind with its 43 winning percentage, tallying 74 victories against 98 losses. FSM was third in the ranking with its 40 percent (26 games won and 37 lost), while Palau, won 19 games and dropped 32 for a 37 winning percentage.

With its domination of the NPQ, the CNMI was awarded 10 of the 20 regular slots on the North Pacific Team, which then competed in the 2012 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships in Fiji in August. Fiji-based Tammy Ackerman later joined the CNMI Team after getting a wild card entry to the POJC. North Pacific Team slots were given to the Top 4 finishers in the U12 and U14 age groups and Top 2 in U18 and although several other CNMI players made it to the Final Four, only two berths are allowed per nation.

In Fiji, the Commonwealth's bets continued their impressive showing, besting 17 other nations in the annual tournament.

The CNMI had the most semifinalists in the POJC with Lopez, Negahr Rastguiy, Ackerman, Isabel Heras, and Carol Lee marching into the Final Four. Pacific region powerhouse and host Fiji had only

four semifinalists, while Samoa earned three. Vanuatu and Tahiti had two each, and Guam, New Caledonia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Norfolk Island, Solomon Islands, and New Caledonia earned one apiece. Cook Islands, American Samoa, Palau, and Tonga bets missed entering the Final Four.

The 2012 success in the POJC was the Commonwealth's second straight, as last year, the CNMI notched six semis seats, beating Fiji (4), the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and New Caledonia, which had two each, and Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga, Cook Islands, and American Samoa, which got one apiece.

Lopez led the CNMI's notable performance in Fiji, as besides winning the girls U15 singles, she also gained the doubles crown with teammate and U15 runner-up Rastguiy, while Heras and Lee took the

girls U12 crown. Heras notched a silver in the singles. Cajigan also brought home a gold medal in the U15 doubles (with FSM's Terry Rush).

After her reign in the POJC and NPQ, Lopez was selected to the Pacific Oceania Touring Team that is now in Australia for a series of competitions. Also selected on the elite squad were Minor, Ackerman, Miller, and Rastguiy, while Luther Lizama, Lee, and Heras made it to the U12 touring team that traveled to New Zealand.

Lee went on to barge into the finals of both the singles and doubles events in a tournament in Waikato, while Heras advanced to the semis of the same competition.

Lee then marched into the Final Four of another singles tournament in Auckland, while Lizama advanced to the doubles finals, and Heras topped the singles consolation draw.

